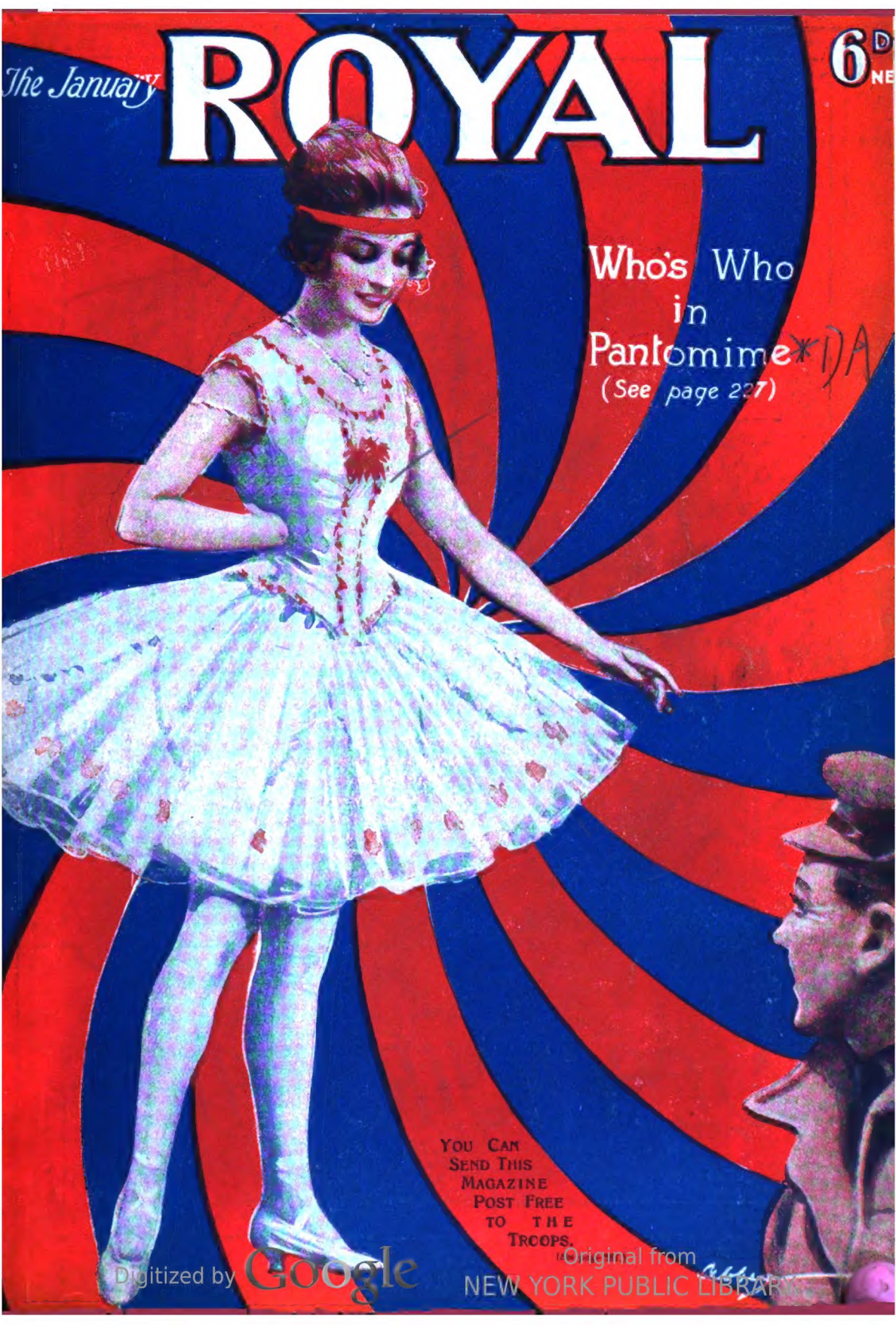

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SEE YOURSELF

the benefit

Beecham's Pills

will do for you.

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A charming Cinderella is Miss Queenie Gwynne, who will be Principal Girl at the Prince's Theatre, Bristol. Turn to page 227, where, in "Columbine & Company," all the old favourites parade for your benefit.

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Photo Foulsham & Banfield

Miss Madge Titheradge, who is a new recruit to pantomime, will be Principal Boy in *Puss in Boots* at Drury Lane. Here's good luck to her!

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COLUMBINE & COMPANY

Drury Lane Pantomime is sure to be a cheery affair with Mr. Will Evans as laughter-maker-in-chief——

Foulsham & Banfield.

By Margaret Chute.

If Columbine and her *confrères*, Harlequin, Pantaloon, and Clown came back they would find many changes in Pantomime as it is to-day. In the following article the immortal four steal back behind the scenes, and learn from the lips of present day pantomime favourites what is going on in Pantomimeland this year.

Out of the mist come four figures dancing hand in hand—a thin man in a diamond-patterned suit, a fragile girl in filmy rose-pink skirts, an old man in blue and red, with white hair and beard, a younger man with a jolly face, chalk-white in patches above his white suit, edged with red. Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, and Clown—at your service.

"Come along!" chortled Clown triumphantly. "*Here* we are again!"

Back from the long ago, dancing their way into the ranks of present-day pantomime players—just Harlequin, Columbine, Pantaloon, and Clown, the immortal quartette!

"So this is Pantomimeland," whispered Columbine. "Seems different, somehow, doesn't it?"

"No sausages, no policemen!" mourned Pantaloon.

"Not a solitary red-hot poker!" lamented

Foulsham & Banfield.

——and Miss Florence Smithson, of the silvery voice, as Principal Girl.

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Clown, his face growing whiter. "They must be mad!"

Columbine laughed.

"They're *not!*" she said. "They know what people like to-day, only it does seem odd! I wonder if they have the same old fairy-stories? I wonder if——. They look very nice, anyhow. I'm going to ask them; I'm not afraid."

The fragile, filmy figure glided up to Miss Florence Smithson.

"Please," began Columbine, "who are you?"

"I'm the Principal Girl in *Puss in Boots*," replied Miss Smithson, quite unsurprised. "At Drury Lane, you know. I played that part last year, and I love it. One night last year a tiny struggling kitten was sent to me accompanied by a letter and a small parcel. 'I am six years old, and my name is Daisy,' the letter began. 'My cat is Puss, and you must have him for your own. In case you thought he ought to have some boots I have got some, and am sending them; take care of him, please.' Puss is quite a big cat now, and has grown out of his boots, but he will keep me company at Drury Lane this year, just the same."

"How nice!" murmured Columbine. "Those things never happened to us, did they?"

Harlequin shook his head.

Miss Ella Retford will make a dashing Prince in *Cinderella* at the London Opera House, where——

Photo Foulsham & Banfield.

——that popular comedian, Mr. Fred Emney, will add to the merriment——

Photo Bacon & Sons

——and Miss Edith Drayson will capture all hearts as Cinderella.

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"I'm a stranger in Pantomimeland," said a clear voice, and out of the shadows stepped a girl. "They call me Madge Titheradge, and I'm going to be Principal Boy in *Puss in Boots* at Drury Lane this year. I've never played a part like that before, and it's going to be a great big adventure for me. Adventures are worth having any time, so I'm looking forward to this one ever so much. Once before I played a boy, Peter Pan, that dearest character of all, and a part I am proud to have taken."

Clown clapped his hands and beamed.

"The stage is getting more real every minute," he cried. "Hallo, who's this?"

"Will Evans is my name," replied the jovial comedian in question. "Drury Lane is my pantomime home, and whether I am whitewashing the ceiling, harnessing a horse, building a chicken-house, or driving a motor, I'm equally happy. My fame as a useful man about the house must have spread, for last year during the pantomime I had a perfectly serious request from a total stranger to whitewash the ceilings in his house. He had heard, he wrote, that I was an expert whitewasher. Would I kindly come to the above address next Tuesday and state my charge for whitewashing four ceilings and an outhouse! It broke my heart to be obliged to decline this offer."

"There was a fairy-story once called *Cinderella*," Columbine said reflectively. "I wonder if——"

"I'm Cinderella—or, rather, one of them," Edith Drayson volunteered. "I'm the one at the London Opera House, and I think Cinderella is the loveliest part; it's so wonderfully and genuinely feminine. A mannish woman

Mr. Billy Merson will make his bow in *Cinderella* at the London Opera House.

Photo Campbell Gray.

Jack and Jill is the attraction at the Theatre Royal, Plymouth, where Miss Eileen Desmond will make a charming Principal Girl.

Photo Bamber, Liverpool.

The Principal Boy in *Jack and the Beanstalk* at the Palladium will be played by that sprightly young actress, Miss Norah Delany.

Photo Bamber, Blackpool.

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Miss Daisy Dormer will be a winsome Goody in *Goody Two Shoes* at the Grand Theatre, Leeds——

——and will be ably supported by Miss Daisy Wood in the *rôle* of Principal Boy.

Photo Bacon & Sons.

Photo Hana.

Miss Renée Reel who is bound to do great things as Principal Girl in *Humpty-Dumpty* at the Theatre Royal, Dublin.

doesn't appeal to me a bit, but once I played a real boy's part, for an act, in the *Girl on the Film*. I had to dress up as a boy, and it was my great ambition to look as much like a real boy as possible.

"Judging by something that happened in one of the big provincial towns, I think I must have succeeded, for one of the female dressers lodged a serious complaint with the management concerning the way that 'young fellow they call Freddy'—meaning me—visited the girls of the company in their dressing-rooms."

"Cinderella is never complete without the prince," said a cheerful voice, "and at the London Opera House I am the prince in question—though most people know me best as Ella Retford. Pantomime-time is always a great joy to me, as I love having a real part to play, in contrast to the music-hall work I do during the year. Since the war began I've managed to put in quite a lot of hospital concerts, like most of my professional brothers and sisters, and, of course, I've been to St. Dunstan's, that wonderful Hostel for Blind Soldiers and Sailors."

Columbine was dabbing her eyes with a scrap of some silken stuff, and even Clown turned aside with a stifled sob.

"I wish I could fight," muttered Harlequin—"I'd show them——"

"We *do* fight in our own way," said Fred Emney quietly. "At the beginning of the war many people thought and said that the theatre was needless, and must go. I think we have proved that the theatre is needed more to-day than it has ever been. And we who stick to our job behind the footlights are helping to beat the Huns by giving our fighting men pleasure and amusement at a time when they need it most.

"Of course, that remark, from a man who plays a Dame in Pantomime, may seem out of place, but it comes from my heart. People seem to like me as a dame, so I'm wearing petticoats again this year at the London Opera House."

A tall girl came forward, smiling.

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"Let me introduce myself, Columbine. I'm Dorothy Ward.

"This year I'm to be 'Boy Blue' at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, and I want to make Boy Blue a real live individual, so that the children who come to the pantomime will say: 'Why, we've read about him in story books!' Last year, when I was Old King Cole, I'm afraid I disappointed one tiny mite, for she sobbed loudly through one scene, and in the interval her mother came round to my room to tell me that the child was so disappointed because I wasn't a big old man with a huge pipe and an army of fiddlers in attendance, that she refused to be comforted, and had been taken home in tears!"

A dainty little lady with big blue eyes came along just then.

"Isn't she lovely?" murmured Harlequin. "I wish we'd had principal girls like that in the old days."

Alice Russon turned round laughing. "You shouldn't talk so loud," she said. "I heard you—and how do you know I'm a Principal Girl? You're right, anyhow, because I'm going to be Principal Girl at Birmingham in *Boy Blue*.

Miss Dorothy Craske, who will be Principal Boy in *Babes in the Wood* at the Court Theatre, Liverpool.

Boy Blue at the Theatre Royal, Birmingham, is sure to make a hit with Miss Dorothy Ward as Principal Boy——

Photo Gottenbury.

——and Miss Alice Russon as the most demure of Principal Girls.

Photo Bertram Park.

Like most people on the stage I seem to lead a busy, exciting life; but the most exciting incident I can remember happened during a holiday this summer. I was wandering along a lane when I heard two motor-cars dashing along the road. The first one slowed down as it reached me, and a voice from the distance yelled: 'There she is!' Then, to my horror, a man leant from the car, picked me up in his arms, swung me into the back of the car, and away it went at racing speed, with the other car behind it.

"Terrified, I stood up. The man looked at me, gasped, and said: 'Good heavens, it's the wrong girl!' Then I discovered I had taken part in a cinema

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That old favourite *Red Riding Hood*, is to fill the bill at the Theatre Royal, Edinburgh, with Miss Marie Brayman as the Principal Boy.

Photo Charles S. Russell, Belfast.

Photo Wrather & Buys.

An ideal Prince for Cinderella will be found in Miss Clarice Mayne at the Palace, Manchester——

drama by accident, and that the real actress engaged for the scene had been left in a lane miles back. I laughed then, but it was awful while it lasted."

Clown and Pantaloon, wandering on their own, tapping traps with their heels, came upon a fair-haired lady intent on the same business.

"I'm Louie Beckman," she said, "so now we *all* know each other. Let me tell you about traps, may I? I wonder what they were like in the old days? D'you know, as Principal Boy, I've had two narrow escapes from falling through trap doors—once at the Lyceum Theatre, London, when I almost went headlong down an open trap while I was climbing off a rostrum. Last year almost exactly the same thing happened at Manchester."

"Coincidence!" said Renée Reel, smiling. "Just wait a minute, and I'll tell you a really strange coincidence—something that actually happened. A few weeks before war was declared I was having a holiday in Belgium, and went into an antique shop in Louvain to argue over the price of something I wanted to buy—in *very* bad French. To my relief an Englishman, who spoke perfect French, came to my rescue, and arranged in two minutes what I'd been struggling with for half-an-hour! Then, to my amazement, this kind stranger said: 'Good-bye, Miss Reel!' I suppose I showed my surprise, for he added: 'You *are* Renée Reel, aren't you?' I said I was, and he nodded, saying: 'I was sure of it. You see, my sister bought a picture of you while you were playing in Brighton not long ago, and I knew you at once!'"

A laugh, a sigh, a whisper of dancing feet, and the mist that hides the days of long ago enshrouds the immortal quartette, while the Pantomime players of to-day march out in all their glory, to carry the banner of pantomime shoulder high to victory.

Photo Warwick Brookes.

——while the same part at the Princes' Theatre, Bristol, will be in the capable hands of Miss Louie Beckman.

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HER GRACE CUPID

By Christine Jope-Slade.

"Oh, yet we trust that somehow good
Will be the final goal of ill."

I.

"Why, Your Grace—Cupid!"

Dr. Benny rose in astonishment as patient No. 10 walked in uninvited, rustling and filling the air with delicate perfume.

"Oh, cut it out!" said Her Grace peevishly. "I'm Cupid e-very time. Her Grace be blowed!"

"I brought 'er to you, Doc," said Her Grace's mother, furtive in black and bugles in the background, filling the air with the indelicate perfume which can now only be bought at certain hours.

Her Grace swore peevishly and offered her own lucid explanation to the astounded Doctor.

"I've hopped it! I've done the dirty on two lady nurses at five quid a week each and one moony old doctor. I bet there'll be some clucking in the bird-cage when they find out. I'd like to see his mother's face; she's part of the rest cure!"

"Now, now, dearie!" soothed her mother.

"Don't you 'dearie' me, you old juniper bush!" stormed Her Grace. Then suddenly she held out her arms, and the rusty black heaved itself into them and there was the sound of tumultuous sobbing.

The Doctor rang the bell.

"Two cups of tea at once," he said firmly.

"And a cigarette, or I'll die!" added Her Grace unsteadily. "Don't you give me milk, or I'll scream the place down! They give me milk—and then they massage it in—and then they give me more. I'm washed in milk. I've got my own cow, and I wish it would die a horrible death. I used to lie and think out deaths for that animal while they read to me. It's being a lady has made me ill!" Her voice rose to a shrill scream. "I'm not going back for anyone!"

The Doctor poured out the tea and handed it to the ladies.

"Now, Cupid," he said firmly, "pull yourself together and tell me all about it. Do you remember those old days at the Kentish Town *Frivolity*, before you made a hit as Cupid and had London at your feet?"

"Good heavens!" said Her Grace passionately, "I should think I do!"

She lifted her face for the first time, and Dr. Benny was shocked and startled. He had known her as a pretty young chorus girl, a lovely West End musical comedy success; he had seen her as the Duke of Morris-Rane's exquisite young bride, mystic and radiant in white satin and happiness, and then she had vanished from his ken. In less than a year she was back in his consulting-rooms a thin, haggard, bloodless young-old woman, with the youth and radiant joyousness that had made her irresistible as Cupid in *Cupid's Crystal Crown* drained from her.

"Cupid," he said very gently, "he looked such a nice boy."

"He is," she said, "but he don't love me any more. You know, Doc"—her voice was very low and exquisitely tender and sad—"I'm clever, and my Lionel's a fool—a dear, sweet, handsome fool. I love him for it."

She lifted her weary, black-ringed eyes to the Doctor's attentive face.

"I suppose the world is made up of bits—some's got one bit and some's got another. Well, Society may be the backbone—it isn't the brains. It takes a clever man to forgive or forget a failure. I was a top-hole success as an actress, and Lionel was so proud of me he used to go on tops of 'buses so's he wouldn't miss a single hoarding with me on

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it. Well, when he married me his old ma pointed out I'd have to switch all that. I switched because I adored him. Well, I've never clicked since.

"As a Society lady people won't look at me—I'm a ghastly, hopeless failure; that old she-cat don't lose a single opportunity of pointing that out to Lionel—and he's fed up with me. If they'd let me go on being myself, I'd have caught on, I'd have been a fashionable success. I wasn't meant to be a lady, and now Lionel's getting tired of me! I'm dull and stupid and moony. His old mother has made him think he wants me to be like all the other dead meat females, but he don't, if he'd only got the brains to see it—he loved me 'cause I *wasn't* like 'em."

She sprang to her feet and walked over to the mirror.

"Oh!" she said. "What a dial! Looks as though it could never strike twelve! I've lost four stone in the last six months. You can hang things on me I'm so bony. Make me fat and pretty again, Doc, like I was before they started making me a lady!"

"If she'd 'ad a kid!" said the old mother, snuffling.

"Thank God I haven't!" stormed Her Grace. "They'd take it away and teach it to put its paw before its face when it coughed and eat asparagus with its hands, and they'd squish the fun and joy out of it like they have out of me!"

Suddenly she darted across the room and flung herself on her knees beside Dr. Benny's chair.

"Help me!" she pleaded desperately. "If I go back to be weighed and punched and stroked and read to and fed any more I shall go balmy! I swear I shall!"

She threw her arms across Dr. Benny's knees and buried her head on them.

II.

None of them heard the car stop.

Then the door opened, and a thin old lady and a particularly good-looking young man came in.

"My dear child," said the thin old lady, "we should never have known if we hadn't seen your car outside!"

"I was a fool not to think of that!" said Her Grace bluntly; then she turned to her young husband.

"Lionel," she pleaded, "Doctor Benny was my doctor when I was a little nipper——"

"My dear Evelyn!" exclaimed her mother-in-law.

The Duchess sprang round, her eyes flaming, her hands clenched.

"Oh, shut up!" she said passionately. "You're killing me between you!"

She turned to her husband.

"Lionel, that honey-voiced doctor and those two fool nurses are driving me balmy. Let me stay with Doctor Benny. He'll put me right. He understands!"

"You talk as though you were a prisoner!" protested His Grace.

"I am!" said Cupid, and pointed to her mother-in-law. "I'm hers."

"My dear child," said the latter, "you are behaving in a ridiculous and undignified manner—and it is so bad for you. Try and control yourself."

Dr. Benny rang the bell, and his old soldier servant appeared.

"I want you to show these two ladies your white rats," said the Doctor.

"I hate white rats!" protested Cupid.

"You will like these," said the Doctor imperturbably, "and so will your mother."

Cupid looked at him steadily.

"All right," she said. "Come on, ma; we're not in this act."

When she had gone, the Doctor motioned his distinguished visitors to chairs; then he sat down at his desk facing them.

"Of course you realise that the little dramatic recital to which we have been treated is the result of nerves," said the old lady. "Poor, dear Evelyn is lamentably lacking in self-control."

The Doctor said nothing.

The husband leant forward.

"She isn't a bit like herself," he said wretchedly; "we've done everything we can. The mater has been a brick, but Cupi—Evelyn seems to resent everything one does."

"It is a symptom of the disease, dearest," said the old lady. "The Doctor will tell you that is only one; there are many others, aren't there, Doctor?"

"Oh, yes!" acquiesced the Doctor indifferently.

"Tell me the biggest symptom?" said the husband.

"Death," answered Dr. Benny quietly. He tapped his thin, nervous fingers on the desk and stared dreamily out of the window.

"Death!" echoed the old lady. "My dear Doctor! Why, the specialist—oh, it's absurd! I—Lionel! My dear boy——"

"Her nerves are being frayed and irritated to pieces," said the Doctor. "Her digestion has gone. She is suffering from anæmia due to lack of happiness and peace of mind; that accounts for the terrible neuralgic headaches. You are starving a nature to which light and laughter and love are an absolute essential."

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"But she has everything money can buy!" protested the old lady.

"So has the wild bird in his cage," the Doctor reminded her. "But the wild bird often pines and dies. The conditions under which the lark lives are different from those of a canary born and reared in captivity. Cupid was not born a duchess."

"You mean that Evelyn is unhappy?"

"Desperately unhappy," said the Doctor coolly

"I would do anything on earth to make her well, Dr. Benny! Don't talk of—— Oh! You can't mean it!"

"What do you suggest?" said the Duchess, white-lipped but tranquil.

"You must open the cage door."

"By that you mean——"

Suddenly she darted across the room and flung herself on her knees beside Dr. Benny's chair. "Help me!" she pleaded desperately. "If I go back to be weighed . . . and read to and fed any more I shall go balmy!"

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"Let her be gay, happy, busy, pretty Cupid again—give her back her sweet, dainty, loving, inconsequent self."

"Let her go back—back to the——"

"Stage," supplied the Doctor quietly. "Why not?"

"It is impossible—out of the question. My son's wife on the stage! I utterly refuse to see her there."

"You find the family vault more refined? Well—perhaps it is."

Then the son spoke.

"If Evelyn wants to go back, she must go back. I give my permission. She must have had a pretty stifling time with us. I—I'm pretty slow at seeing things. She didn't want to marry me at first. I sort of see now."

"Lionel, you wouldn't countenance——"

"If she wanted to be a lion tamer I would buy her the lions."

"The great thing is to provide the whip, the audience, and the clapping," said the Doctor drily. He looked at the startled young husband intently, and saw exceeding kindness and great distress in his white face and unhappy eyes.

He looked at the mother-in-law and saw blue-blood and a dried-up heart, and he saw that Class was her creed and Convention her god.

"It is not to be thought of!"

"Why?" asked the Doctor curtly.

"Because my family——"

"My good lady," said the Doctor coolly, "your family doesn't matter a bean. The world is bored stiff with 'family'—what it's mad about is brains and virility and originality. 'Family' is dead. Nobody's watching you; you don't do anything, you don't contribute anything to the joy and beauty and gaiety of life. If they took your name and your earwig rampant (or whatever your family crest is) from you to-morrow, you'd be as ordinary as little Mrs. Jones or Smith—and so would all your people. They're only bazaar openers and estate agents on a large scale. Your son marries a lovely girl, with bunches of brains, who could earn £2000 a year to-morrow, and——"

"My good man!"

"I am not your good man," objected the Doctor coolly, "but you make me sick."

Then he turned to the husband.

"It's freedom or the family vault for Cupid," he told him with intentional brutality.

A voice came floating through the open window, clear and sweet and silvery:

> Sing in the Park
> Out in the dark,
> Dear London nightingale.

His Grace lifted his curly head.

"I consent to anything and everything," he exclaimed.

His mother said nothing.

III.

Dr. Benny requisitioned the services of a happy young bank clerk's wife, of infinite tact and great cheerfulness.

"You will wear a pink uniform, and you will be soft-footed and soft-voiced," he told her.

"You will be aloof without being chilly, and sympathetic without being soppy. You will keep it up three weeks. I am having the top room furnished in pink and white as a rest cure room, and later I shall give you five guineas, and send you out to buy all the stupid things you think a woman might like. I shall charge enormously, otherwise they will consider me worth nothing. You will get three guineas a week for that. I expect everything that the average employer doesn't get. The patient will see no one but you and myself."

At the end of the three weeks Cupid was radiant and rosy, full of cream and courage and energy and emulsion.

Clad in a pale orchid boudoir gown and a boudoir cap of corresponding chicness, she held séances with a person of brilliant brains and jewelled tie pins, at which his nose was for ever trying to peer.

She signed a contract to appear in a new musical comedy entitled *Silver Sequins*, in which she was to sing eight songs and appear in sixteen different dresses.

Her husband came to see her, and found her scintillating and effervescing with the sheer joy of life, wayward, exquisite, coquettish, and alluring.

Little groups of entranced listeners gathered beneath Dr. Benny's windows to listen to a beautiful voice, fresh and joyous, singing how to "Sew Silver Sequins on a Seamless Silken Shirt," and little bundles of shabby humanity stood huddled and silent to hear how "The Little God Love Sends His Swift Arrows Far."

Then the day came when she hurled herself rapturously into Dr. Benny's arms, hugged the amateur nurse, and was escorted by the most devoted, frantically in love, and certainly one of the best looking husbands in London into her car.

Her mother-in-law was in Nice, where she remained for the crowded first night of *Silver Sequins*, when Her Grace the Duchess sang and danced her way back into the hearts of the public.

Her son considerately sent his mother all the press cuttings; they were profuse in their adjectives, unanimous in their praise.

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Two of them said her daughter-in-law was the most fascinating person in London; the rest contented themselves with comparing her to things which blossom mainly in fiction.

The Paris *Daily Mail* informed her that her daughter-in-law had sung at two great charity affairs at which Royalty was present.

It dawned on her, for she was not a stupid woman, that the beautiful young Duchess had got much further than any of her ancestors.

Dr. Benny received tickets for the first night of *Silver Sequins*. He took Her Grace's cheery amateur nurse and little Tilda, a cripple of the slums, and afterwards they were invited to Her Grace's dressing-room, and wept over and kissed, and offered cold salmon and champagne, and tea and truffles, and other unconsidered trifles; it would have done his mother good to have seen her son's rapturous adoration and delight in Cupid.

Possibly it dawned on the bank clerk's wife that they made a strange trio, she in a full black evening dress, the Doctor in the dress suit he had sported as a student, and Tilda in her black frock with a Cambridge ribbon round her waist and in her hair.

The room was full of floral tokens of appreciation; they stood on tables and on the floor.

Cupid presented a gigantic posy of parma violets to her nurse, and a great sheaf of red carnations to Tilda.

"It was beautifuller than a funeral!" Tilda whispered rapturously going home in a taxi. "All them flowers."

It was six months later that Her Grace, lovelier than ever, stood fidgeting on the doorstep of Dr. Benny's house in Camden Town, half laughing, half crying, her eyes on the waiting car and the eager questioning, handsome face at the window.

"Then I'm to give up dancing? I don't suppose I shall go back—after. I'm not as keen as I was."

"No?"

"No; you see, I have learnt lots of things since then."

"Sure?"

She threw her arms round the young Doctor and kissed him.

"I'm so happy!" she said. Then she darted across the pavement, and Dr. Penny heard her voice.

"Lionel—it's true! It's true!"

He saw the Duke's arm reach out and draw her in; he saw their two awed, happy, young faces pressed together, unconscious of all the world; he saw hers white, radiant, wet with tears, as if already she felt upon her the hand of Destiny.

Then the car moved on, and he went in and shut the door.

TOMMY'S SMILE.

When poor old Tommy's marching on the muddy roads of France,
When he's tramping with his comrades to assist the Great Advance,
With his heels so sore and blistered he can hardly drag along—
What has made him look so happy as he hums a cheery song?

Well, it's partly 'cause he's going to smash the baby-killing Huns,
And disturb their cosy dug-outs with our giant heavy guns;
But it's mostly 'cause he's thinking of a girl he's left behind—
A little girl who's out of sight, but never out of mind.

"Oh! she didn't half look stunning when she said 'Good-bye' to me,
An' her eyes were kind of wat'ry, though she thought I didn't see,
An' her pretty hat was tilted on her curly golden head,
An' her cheeks were like a roseleaf that had lost its velvet red!

"They can march me on their bloomin' roads till both my feet is sore,
They can stick me in a trench that's like a blessed reservoir,
They can pelter me with bullets till I'm dazed and nearly blind,
But my heart is safe in England with the girl I left behind!"

E. Margaret Keir.

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Photo Elliott & Fry, Ltd.

Mr. W. Pett Ridge, who contributes the following striking article.

What 1916 has Taught Us.

By W. Pett Ridge.

Since the commencement of the war we have had many hard lessons to learn, many difficult tasks to face under that remorseless headmaster known as Fate. In the following striking article Mr. W. Pett Ridge, the famous author, sums up the progress which, as a nation engaged in the greatest war in history, we may claim to have made during 1916.

We have been at school since August, 1914, and in course of time we shall be regarding the experience through the haze that distance brings. It is this cloudiness which enables mature folk to say reminiscently:

"Well, the very best period of my life came when I was a schoolboy." A pause, and then the significant admission: 'Only I didn't recognise the fact at the time.'

In truth, all education has its painful side, and the older we grow the more difficult it becomes. For one thing, age brings a certain stubbornness. Ideas have become fixed, and are reluctant to change, though circumstances and the environments may alter. I suggest that the lessons to be gained from our attendances at the school controlled by a headmaster called Fate have been of such importance that in order to use them correctly we shall do well to throw aside prejudice, and not have too much pride in holding on to consistency.

Acquiring Self-Control.

It seems, in looking back to the commencement of the first term of the year, that we have acquired a habit of accepting successes without hysteria, and of taking punishment and disaster with composure. There arrived at the beginning of January two or three hard whacks—the loss of the *Persia*, the sinking of the *Glengyle* and the *Geelong*, the accident to H.M.S. *Edward VII.*—and similar blows have followed. There has sometimes been a feeling of indignation, sometimes one of resentment, but there has been nothing like depression.

I take it we have become increasingly obedient to authority. The Compulsory Service Bill was brought in, agreed to by the two Houses, and accepted by the people. (I am told, by the by, that the late Derby men, sometimes alluded to as the Hard Thinkers because they took time for consideration, have made, in the opinion of sergeants and other critics not too easily pleased, some of the best and finest soldiers in the British Army.)

Increased Respect for Authority.

Thousands of small homes had to be given up when father was called; mother and the children, once the wrench had passed, took their new surroundings with resignation and calm. The reduced hours for licensed premises created scarcely a murmur; the early closing of shops has met with agreement. The severe lighting rules

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are carried out mainly by the people themselves, and anyone who breaks them is promptly summoned to account by neighbours. We submit to increased taxation with something like alacrity, and the Income Tax Notice of Assessment arouses no more protest than a birthday card.

Women's Place in the Scheme.

We have found that women are capable of entering departments of work formerly considered fitted only for men. Gibes against the foolishness and weakness of the sex give place to respect, and a very sincere admiration for their usefulness to the country. The important business of banking could not be carried on now without the aid of women; your correspondence would be delayed if they were not assisting the Postmaster-General; the convenience of travel is kept up only with their help, and Mr. Lloyd George knows, and the rest of us can guess at, what the munition supply would be at the present moment if the services of women had proved unavailable, or, being available, had proved useless.

If there happens to be any man left who still believes that members of the opposite sex have no right to exercise a vote and share in the government of the country, he ought to obtain permission to go through some of the large munition factories and ascertain for himself how girls in their thousands are taking part in the salvation of the country. If he can, after this, retain his anti-war views on the subject, I suggest that in his will he leave them as curiosities to the British Museum. The girls work hard and they work well. I was told, in one of my visits to a Midland town, that following on an air-raid all the men in a certain factory took a day off to inspect the sights; every female worker came on duty as usual.

A Nation that Keeps its Head.

So much for some of the comforting facts acquired during the year's tuition. It may be added, to our credit, that we have learnt to admire the sane optimist, and to disregard the foolish specimen. Occasionally the second has expressed himself on newspaper placards, and his announcements are now taken with a proper incredulity. In March last there was one saying, "Turkey sues for Peace." This must have been from the same hand that earlier in the war gave, "Only two forts left in the Dardanelles." Relatives, in a minor position of life, of the type who write inaccurate posters, rush through London streets on Sunday evenings bawling the most cheerful news—the product, not of the journals they sell, but of their own imagination.

I come to the harder lessons.

The class-room of 1916 has, on its mathematical side, informed us that prices of necessities are rising steadily, but until quite recently the situation was regarded by the authorities with something that could easily have been mistaken for indifference. It was easy once to gain comfort from the news of bread tickets and meatless days, and other precautionary steps taken in Germany.

"Proves," folk remarked acutely, "that she is near to the end of her resources!"

The same folk see now that it proved nothing of the kind; it was but an indication that over there men at the head of affairs could peer ahead and were not afraid to risk misunderstanding by adopting definite plans. Here we seem to have few who have the required initiative and the needful determination.

The Sport of Money-Makers.

There is no question of difficulty in inducing the people to obey—the trouble is to find a man to issue orders. Eggs, bacon, meat, bread, fruit—all these articles should be under control, but at the time of writing they are not. They are too precious and too indispensable to become the sport of money-makers. It can be admitted that in time of war there has always existed a feverish desire to secure profits, and it can be answered that statesmen are chosen because they are suspected of an ability to check this, and to keep it within reasonable limits.

I made casual allusion just now to the name of one member of the Cabinet. I am probably not alone in expressing the wish that we had a dozen replicas of this statesman, all endowed with his industry and his powers of organisation; if they can be obtained in one way only, then the sooner a factory is started for the cultivation of solicitors' clerks in North Wales the better. Nowhere is one so urgently required as at Gwdyr House, S.W. To the Board of Trade in the present year of tuition pupils are not excessively indebted.

There have occurred attempts by inefficient but very well-meaning voluntary assistants to instruct us on the methods of dealing with pensions for soldiers and sailors and the care of them after the war; many of the teachers set up associations on their own account and endeavoured to deal with the problem by inviting sums from the benevolent. It should be understood that here is no question for tinkering.

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The Halt and the Maimed.

The country is eager and anxious to do the fair thing by the men who have saved it from destruction, and now is the time for the fair thing to be done; later, some of the enthusiasm of thankfulness may diminish; it is a way that time and distance have. There was a period in the history of Great Britain when the country felt no pain in the sight of ex-army men engaged with a broom in sweeping a crossing; more recently it was content to

> "Give 'im a letter,
> Can't do no better,
> Late Troop-Sergean'-Major an'—
> Runs with a letter!"

I am not sure whether it is justice or common sense or gratitude which have increased, but I know we are going to do better than this. There are plenty of useful and sufficiently dignified trades that can be taught to the partially disabled, and the whole matter should be controlled and organised by authority.

It is natural that in days of stress—running now into years—certain of the social movements which were progressing before August, 1914, endure neglect. Good and excellent folk are to be discovered to attend to the machinery, but there are only just enough of these in normal times to go round, and more dashing and adventurous tasks have enticed many away from ordinary interests.

As a consequence, the wheels of the engine-room, called Infant Welfare, are going slowly, and this happens at a time when life has to be given up recklessly, and life is, therefore, more than ever valuable to the nation.

Citizens of the Future.

There are boroughs in London where, for years past, excellent and well-equipped women have devoted themselves to the occupation of making flowers to grow instead of weeds, to the saving of little lives in the early months, and to the bringing up of them as sound, healthy citizens of no mean country.

Any woman of leisure, whose hours ar not otherwise occupied and completely occupied, can scarcely be content unless she is taking a share in this. It is something, perhaps, for her name to appear in the subscription-lists, but it is better still that she should join one of the life-boat crews and help in rescuing the little people who, in the absence of aid, will sink. This is woman's work, and she need have no lack of confidence in herself.

It was a woman who, when the authorities declined the services of an ambulance party, entirely staffed by her own sex, on the ground that men should be in charge, straightway took the matter into her own hands and proved, during the Serbian retreat, that the authorities were wrong.

One of the best-managed of the military hospitals in London known to me is the establishment in Endell Street, where the only men in the establishment are the patients. Amongst the alluring and provocative illustrated posters exhibited in the early part of the struggle might well have been a variant on one, with the legend of "Mother, what did you do in the Great War?" There is still time for the preparation by any leisured woman of a satisfactory answer.

A New Standard of Values.

A lesson acquired during the years of hard tuition is that in war-time weights and measures are changed. Those of us who happen to be novelists have had to recognise that our usefulness is small; to folk who paint pictures the assurance has come that they are in no way indispensable; the stage has justified its continued existence only by amusing and interesting the men home on leave or the convalescents. These professions are for times of peace; they do little to help the country to achieve peace. They are ornaments on the mantelshelf, decorative but not otherwise helpful. It is by no means certain that politicians have the value now which they once had; if placed upon the scales and weighed truly their services to the country would probably show a decrease.

On the other hand, youth is deserving of an esteem which it never before was able to claim. Youth, possessing strength and not wanting in nerves, has gained a respect which must never be allowed to pass out of memory. But for the assistance given by youth during the past twelve months we should have been wingless birds in the competition for supremacy in the air; youth's services on land and sea are writ upon the records. There will be work for sculptors when the fighting ceases, and complaints may be made of overcrowding in Trafalgar Square and in Parliament Square: I hope space is already being staked out for a memorial that will acknowledge appropriately the services done to the country, during the great war, by youth.

All Honour to Youth!

A tradition amongst elder folks is that praise should not be given to the young. "Turns their heads!" is the warning. Since it now appears that the heads are uncommonly well screwed on, there will be no great

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danger during the coming year in trying the experiment of offering the congratulations they have so well earned. For myself, I am abashed when they call me "sir," and I feel that it is I who ought to be using towards them this title of respect.

We have had classes in the past twelve months for the encouragement of thrift, and these suffered from the multitudes of professors; occasionally it seemed as though every one was at the blackboard, instructing, and nobody at the desks. Peremptory advice was shouted in enormous capitals from the hoardings. Addresses were given, up hill and down dale. Newspapers filled columns with urgent appeals, ingenious devices, stern cautions. It is probable we have learnt something, but there remains much to do ere we reach the standard of perfection. I speak shyly about fashions, because some of the patronesses of West-end shops are young women who earn good wages by doing admirable work, and it would be an impertinence to tell them how they should disburse their money; that the establishments are not reduced to an exhausted point is shown by the circumstance that a fashion journal which has come my way contains thirty-five pages of advertisements.

Boots are, if one may say so, on a different footing. Leicester and Nottingham and certain other towns work at high pressure to furnish boots to our Army and to some of our Allies. The elaborate footwear that one sees must engage the time and labour of workmen who could be more serviceably engaged in performing tasks which arise in carrying on the war. If there is any one person who can give a lead in the matter of boots, I hope she will issue an imperative order for sweet simplicity and long wear.

Compulsory Thrift.

In other quarters the New Year may find it needful to introduce compulsory thrift for folk who are better off on account of the war. People who can lend to the Government, but will not lend to the Government, should be made to lend. We are going to win this war, and if we are to win it soon there must be no stint so far as the nation's expenditure on the Army and the Navy are concerned. Because of our niggardliness in this respect during earlier years we are paying heavily now; that is one of the lessons always to be remembered.

We resume our studies in January. We are, it will be noted, attending a school of special difficulty — to use the Board of Education Committee phrase—and the end of our scholastic career is coming into view. It is for us to justify now to the full the second part of a frank comment made upon us by a neutral authority on the other side of the Atlantic.

"Poor starters," he remarked, "but darn good finishers!"

CHRISTMAS WITHOUT HIM.

To the haven of my bedroom
With its chintz of rose and grey,
I have slipped away unnoticed
In the midst of Christmas Day.
I can't refrain from picturing—
Though I'm trying not to grieve—
The glorious things we meant to do
If you'd come home on leave.

I bought a brand-new evening frock—
I chose it, dear, for you—
A dream of pink and silver,
Like a rosebud gemmed with dew.
You'd have called it "simply corking!"
But it's lost its charm for me,
Since your dismal dug-out claims you
And you won't be here to see.

They are coming up to find me!
There'll be games, perhaps a dance,
But my heart's with you, beloved,
On the battlefields of France.
And I know you'll understand, dear,
Though I may seem bright and gay,
How I longed for you and missed you
Every hour of Christmas Day.

Dorothy Rose.

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THE INCUBATOR

By William Freeman.

"Do I sleep? Do I dream?
Do I wander and doubt?
Are things what they seem?
Or is visions about?"

The trouble really began with Tabitha, or, to be rigidly accurate, with Clorinda's suspicions concerning Tabitha. As a cross-bred, dun-coloured hen of motherly appearance she had cost me four-and-sixpence at Bunchester Market; as a lady who didn't know her own mind, she cost Clorinda several anxious hours. More than once Clorinda was convinced that Tabitha was "going broody," a mysterious semi-ailment for which every chicken-keeper in our immediate neighbourhood had his own pet and infallible remedy.

At eleven-thirty precisely on a certain April morning Tabitha lollopped heavily into a vacant nest-box and refused to budge therefrom, despite offerings of corn, warm mash, and the juiciest cabbage-stump in the garden.

"There's only one thing to be done," said Clorinda when tea-time came and Tabitha was still a fixture. "I'll get a sitting of eggs from Pummery. He isn't leaving till to-morrow."

Pummery is—or was—a horny-handed fruit and vegetable grower who deals in poultry as a side-line. Having received a warm invitation to visit Flanders at the Government's expense, he had been selling off his stock in the month's grace assigned him by the local tribunal.

To his house Clorinda betook herself an hour later. She returned in a state of badly-suppressed triumph with twelve eggs of a pale coffee tint in a strawberry-punnet.

"They're absolutely the last he has," she announced, "Langshan-Minorcas. Three-and-six a dozen was all he charged, and he gave me an odd one in."

"But where is it?" I asked.

"I—I dropped it on the way," said Clorinda. "I was so frightfully excited."

A sixpenny handbook—an early purchase—gave us minute instructions as to how to set the eggs. I fancied I detected a glint of sardonic amusement in Tabitha's eye as I slid them under her, and mentioned it.

"She's overjoyed, naturally," said Clorinda. "Dear old thing!"

Immediately after breakfast the next morning, Clorinda went to see how the dear old thing was getting on. The nest was unoccupied; at the far end of the run Tabitha pecked at the cabbage-stump with an air of boredom.

"The *wretch!*" said Clorinda.

She counted the eggs feverishly. The number had risen to thirteen. Perhaps a hennish sense of justice had inspired Tabitha to contribute her share before departing.

"But we can't send the eggs back to Pummery," wailed Clorinda. "We must either sell them to someone else, or get another broody hen."

Matters were at this stage when I left for town. I came home at the end of a busy day, but Clorinda, judging from her own account, had spent a far busier one. Condensing a vivid narrative, I inferred that she had tried to sell the eggs to Mrs. Gruggson, the Whybarrow-Smyths, Miss Dobbes, and old Muttingham. All were delightfully polite—the people, not the eggs—and old Muttingham was positively playful; but none of them in the least wanted a setting of unhatched Minorca-Langshans.

Nor were Clorinda's efforts in search of a broody hen any more successful. Neither the butcher, nor the grocer, nor the laundryman knew of one that wasn't already working overtime, so to speak. So Clorinda covered up the rejected eggs with an old blanket, put them in the warmest corner of the kitchen, and hoped for the best. But her face when she told me of her failures was tragic. When one is bitten with war-time economy, the loss of three-and-sixpence assumes the nature of a national disaster.

The narrative was barely finished when

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Providence, or Chance, or the Fates—the alias doesn't matter—chipped in, and the heavy figure of Jebbins, our local carrier, came stamping down the side path to the tradesmen's entrance. Clorinda sped to the door; I followed.

"Where'd I best put it?" demanded the voice of Jebbins.

"Put what?" asked Clorinda, not without a touch of excitement.

"The inkybater," said Jebbins briefly.

"The *incubator!*"

"That's what they calls 'em, mum," said Jebbins, and turning his back on us, stamped back again to his van. He returned staggering under the weight of a crate, which he dumped down. Through the slats could be perceived a square box of polished wood, with elaborate fitments at the side suggestive of a glorified coffee-percolator.

All we discovered was a booklet . . . called "Fortunes in Incubators." Clorinda turned the pages with feverish interest.

"Label got tore off at the station," said Jebbins, "but they 'adn't no doubt there but what it was meant for you. And as I was comin' this way, I thought I'd better bring it along."

"Uncommonly thoughtful of you," I said. "What's the damage?"

"Call it 'arf-a-crown," said Jebbins.

We called it so. The gate banged upon his departing figure. Clorinda and I were left face to face, the crate between us.

"It's Providence!" breathed Clorinda.

"I trust the rightful owner will see it in that light. Though how we're to find out who he is——"

"If I fetched the hammer and pincers," suggested Clorinda, with suspicious eagerness, "you could unpack the incubator. Very likely there's a note inside."

And before I could answer she had sped into the house and returned with the tools.

I knocked off several slats, revealing a showy, solidly-built, obviously expensive affair.

"You'll have to take it right out before you can look properly," said Clorinda.

It was done. Cautiously we opened various drawers and doors. None of them yielded the slightest clue to the owner. Even the name of the maker was absent. All we discovered was a booklet, copiously illustrated with lettered diagrams, called "Fortunes in Incubators." Clorinda turned the pages with feverish interest.

"To fill the lamp," she murmured, "unscrew the cap 'D,' pour oil into the reservoir 'MM,' and adjust wick at 'R.'" She paused. "Of course, the apparatus must have been frightfully bumped about during the journey."

"Yes, but I don't see——"

"But the owner wouldn't have a chance of obtaining compensation unless he notified the railway people at once?"

"That's so."

"Then don't you think we ought to test it by filling the lamp, and so on?" asked Clorinda.

We filled the lamp, and lit it. No flaws or defects revealed themselves. Clorinda drew a breath of relief; then, remembering the

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eggs by the kitchen fire, she lapsed again into pessimism.

"And even while we're talking," she said, "a dozen innocent lives are being sacrificed through the stupidity of a hen that doesn't know her own mind. It's frightful!"

"Frightful!" I agreed.

We looked at one another. Clorinda had the grace to blush slightly.

"Why not?" she said. "Just till the morning?"

The eggs were inserted in the incubator according to the instructions in the super-diagrammed booklet, and the incubator itself placed in a corner of the scullery. For the rest of the day Clorinda made no direct allusion to it, but her manner was pensive, not to say *distrait*, and once or twice I heard her sigh heavily. She went to bed early, but I don't think she slept particularly well. I came down to breakfast to find her regarding the incubator absently, the coffee-pot in one hand and the toast-rack in the other.

"I suppose," she said, "that we really *ought* to make further inquiries?"

"Undoubtedly."

"But the eggs will be absolutely ruined if they're taken out again."

"The rightful owner might retort that you ought to have thought of that before you put them in."

"But they'd have been ruined if I hadn't put them in!" said Clorinda with melancholy triumph.

That evening I was home later than usual. But Clorinda was later still. She looked fagged and pale.

"Have you started tea?" I shook my head, and she continued: "Dick, I've had a frightful time! I've called on no less than seven people who're interested in chickens, and written to a lot more that don't live near enough to be visited. I got their addresses from Mr. Pummery—I met him in khaki this morning. Everyone seemed to think that the incubator must be meant for them; it seems that there's an awful scarcity of such things, though it's so late in the season, and they all had eggs that they wanted to set."

"Evidently a very cocksure and henergetic lot!" I said.

"It's nothing to make loathsome puns about," said Clorinda bitterly. And within the next twenty-four hours I realised that she was right.

It was Clorinda who suggested a visit later in the evening to the station, and I who went. The station-master, a new arrival, was brusque and haughty. I have never met a man more disinclined to chat. He had heard nothing whatever of the incubator, but the porters might know something about it, and I had his leave to question them. One I found engaged mysteriously in the lamp-shed, and inaccessible; the other, a very rural and aged man, brightened visibly at my allusion to an incubator, and said he knew all about it.

"Was it," I asked, "addressed to 'Mon Repos,' Gallipoli Avenue?"

He wasn't sure. It was either that or "Ye Cottage," Anzac Drive. In fact, Anzac Drive had been at the back of his mind the minute he saw me. Maybe Worplestone—he of the lamp-shed—might know. Worplestone, strongly urged, was persuaded to show himself. He confronted me with a lump of cotton-waste in his hand, and stated quite definitely that "The Bays," Mons Crescent, was the address on the crate. He added that the lady came back to complain that one of the rollers was cracked. Twenty minutes passed before I discovered that both of them thought I was referring to a patent washing-machine.

I went home unenlightened. Going in by the back entrance, I saw a policeman in the kitchen. His helmet was on the dresser, and his attention was divided between the official notes he was taking and the bottle of ginger-beer that Clorinda had thoughtfully provided.

"What I want to know," she was demanding passionately, "is this. Aren't I justified in refusing to give it up to anyone who isn't really any more sure than I am that it belongs to them—I mean me—and who can't prove it, but who's mean enough to want to take it away before the eggs are hatched?"

The policeman wiped his mouth, and said cautiously that it looked like it.

"Thanks, tremendously," said Clorinda.

"Though it ain't part o' my dooty to say for certain," he added, and picked up his helmet and departed.

"Well?" said Clorinda when she saw me.

"Nothing doing," I replied.

"Which means that we can keep it!"

"So long as your conscience—and Aunt Caroline—will let you," I reminded her.

"I—I'd forgotten Aunt Caroline," said Clorinda faintly.

Aunt Caroline Tangerby is the nearest approach to a millionaire that our joint families can produce. She has nine hundred and fifty from ground rents in Tooting, and Clorinda is very much her favourite niece. Aunt Caroline's two most glaring qualities are an insatiable curiosity and a passion for honesty which amounts to a disease. She not only practises what she preaches, but she preaches too much and too often. And the time for her annual visit was due.

"She knows we keep chickens," I said,

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"but she knows as well that we're jolly hard up. If once she catches sight of that expensive incubator——"

"I know," wailed Clorinda. "But we can put it somewhere out of sight—the big cupboard in the bathroom will do—and drape it with towels and things. And Aunt never stays more than a day or so."

On the Saturday, as usual, I caught the 2.15 home. Outside the gate I noticed a covered van with a boy in charge, and a coster's barrow, ditto. I walked up the path to find the front door already ajar and our small *hall full* of people. To be exact, there were *six*. There was a man with grizzled hair and a Semitic nose, a thin man with a tanned face and hard blue eyes, a grey-bearded man, and a red-headed youth wearing an armlet. They represented the visiting team, so to speak. There was also the policeman who had partaken of ginger-beer in our kitchen, and Clorinda. She gave a gasp of relief when she saw me.

"Oh, I'm so glad you've come!"

"So am I. But who—why——?"

A babel of voices answered me. At intervals the policeman said: "One at a time, gents, if *you* please," but none of them took the smallest notice of him. All their statements varied, but one word occurred with monotonous and sinister frequency. That word was "incubator."

"Listen!" I shouted at last. "All this is frantically exciting and interesting, but it wants sorting. Give me a pencil and paper"—Clorinda produced both with magical swiftness—"and all just claims shall be met. Now then——" I turned to the grey-bearded man. "Name. Address. Grievance, if any?"

Greybeard's name was Suttler. Address, Fashoda Lane. He went in for Buff Orpingtons. Had an incubator long overdue, and was convinced that this was his. Demanded immediate delivery.

"And you?" I said to the red-headed one.

Name of Huppy, representing the Cluck-Cluck Poultry Syndicate. Firm had been expecting delivery of incubator for past month. Instructed by his managing director not to return without it, on pain of dismissal.

"You?"

The name of the tanned man was Ossling. Dealer living in Ireland had written stating that he was sending an incubator on approval. On receipt of Clorinda's letter had no shadow of doubt that this was the incubator referred to, Bunchester being the nearest station.

This brought us to the hook-nosed man.

"And you?"

Name of Samuelson. Had ordered and

Going in by the back entrance, I saw a policeman in the kitchen. His helmet was on the dresser, and his attention was divided between the official notes he was taking and the bottle of ginger-beer Clorinda had thoughtfully provided.

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Aunt Caroline unfastened the leather handbag she carried. . . . "Here," she said, "is a possible explanation—a letter which I wrote a week ago and which the maid neglected to post."

paid for incubator in February. Had since written seven lawyer's letters to the firm, which in the interval had gone bankrupt.

I turned to the policeman.

"I suppose," I said, "that you don't by any chance lay claim to the incubator?"

The policeman shook his head. His expression suggested regret for lost opportunities. It appeared that he had been merely passing the house on his beat when the lady called him in. The hubbub broke out afresh.

It was at its height when the Fates brought off a dramatic trick stale enough for a modern farce. A figure appeared in the doorway—the figure of Aunt Caroline. Being of the type which wears rubber tips to her heels, her advance had been practically noiseless; coming, as she had done, obliquely across the lawn and path, she had heard a good deal before we saw her, and honesty compelled her to inform us of the fact.

"Within the last two minutes"—and at the sound of her voice we both jumped as though we had been stung—"I have heard the pair of you referred to in terms that I cannot conceive applicable to any member of my family. Either you are being grossly libelled or——"

Mr. Samuelson wheeled swiftly to the attack.

"Since you appear to be a relative, ma'am, there's no harm in mentioning the matter. It's about an incubator."

"Where is it?" demanded Aunt Caroline.

"In—in the cupboard in the bathroom," faltered Clorinda. "The label was missing, and we were waiting to find out who sent it."

Aunt Caroline unfastened the leather handbag she carried with a click that seemed to echo like a pistol-shot.

"Here," she said, "is a possible explanation—a letter which I wrote a week ago and which the maid neglected to post. I discovered it this morning. While you are perusing it I will take the opportunity of inspecting your garden."

She moved away with stately tact. I opened the envelope and read aloud:

Wangham Parva.
April 15th, 1916.

MY DEAR RICHARD,

Learning that you have taken up chicken keeping I am sending you, as a small surprise, an incubator, built to my order by a Belgian refugee who is an expert carpenter, and who hopes to make a livelihood by such work. With it I am also enclosing a pamphlet which will explain as much as is necessary to a man of your intelligence. I trust to pay my promised visit on the 22nd instant.

Your affectionate aunt,
CAROLINE TANGERBY.

I glanced at my visitors. But they seemed to have lost interest in the subject. One by one they were stealing towards the road. The last to depart was Mr. Samuelson.

"Anyone with a conscience as high-strung as your good lady's," he said, "ain't fit for the rough-and-tumble of the chicken business. Growin' mustard and cress out o' penny packets is about her line. You might tell her so, with my compliments!"

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BURIED ALIVE

By Patrick MacGill.

No author has brought the war home to the reading public more vividly than Rifleman Patrick MacGill, the brilliant author of that marvellously realistic war book "The Red Horizon." The following story is based on an incident that came within the author's own experience, one of those almost incredible incidents that illustrate the endurance and devotion to duty of the men who are making history on the battlefields of Flanders.

I.

It was past eight o'clock of an October evening and the soldiers in "Home Sweet Home" dug-out sat down to late tea. The dug-out was situated at the bottom of a deep chalk-pit, and was occupied by officers' servants, company runners, signallers, and others who generally kept in close touch with battalion headquarters. The chalk-pit was immune from shell fire, for, being narrow and deep, no shell could reach the bottom, round which a ring of spacious dug-outs circled. Over the top and five hundred yards eastwards ran the communication trench, which wound its way discreetly up to the British front line.

Lights gleamed in the dug-outs, and sounds of laughter and singing could be heard from "Home Sweet Home." It was a capacious shelter, originally fashioned by the French, and capable of holding thirty men. At the present moment it contained some fifteen British soldiers engaged in the pleasant task of eating a substantial meal. Rations as well as the post had just come up from the railhead, rum was issued, and the parcels from home had been bulky.

The meal was proceeding merrily when the waterproof sheet that covered the door was raised and a newcomer entered. He stood for a moment looking round; then he approached an upended ammunition box which stood in the centre of the dug-out and sat down on it.

"Oh, it's old Fitzgerald!" exclaimed Murtagh Ryan, a tall, handsome youth who was endeavouring, with the aid of a bayonet, to draw the cork from a rum-jar.

"How are things going on up at Sap 8?" he asked.

"Not so bad," Fitzgerald answered. "There's plenty of shells flying across. More than is good for our health. Sap 8 is not the most pleasant place on our front. I've helped to take a prisoner down."

"A prisoner?" Ryan exclaimed, handing Fitzgerald a drop of rum in a mess-tin. "A German?"

"Yes, a youngster," Fitzgerald answered. "He was caught on a listening patrol—wounded and unconscious. I've got to wait here until he recovers, hear what he has to say, and report back to Captain Thorley with any information. You know we fear a mine going up at the sap, for all day and night we can hear tapping under the ground."

Fitzgerald held out his mess-tin again and received another tot of rum.

Fitzgerald was an Irishman who had lived a stirring life roving through many parts of the world. He had been a sailor, a tramp, a man of money who moved in society, an outcast who slept in a doss-house, and a trombone player at Salvation Army meetings. He had been a fighter in a Mexican rebellion, and belonged to a regiment, the soldiers of which had to wear great coats on their triumphal march through a certain town because of the bad condition of their trousers. He knew a smattering of most languages, but vowed that he was only proficient in one—bad language.

He had had a college education, but developed a love of drink early in life. It took very little to make him mellow; two pints of beer sent him to the gutter. Despite this he was thoughtful, grave, and dutiful, though at times as petulant and perverse as a child. His face had a certain ascetic cast; his lips were pale and sensitive, his nostrils mobile and sensuous, and his long-lashed, dark eyes gave an almost feminine

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touch to his features. He loved poetry and loved to quote it, but seldom remembered more than one line.

At present the rum put him in a gay, good humour, and as he spoke to young Ryan his voice, loud enough but very soft and pleasant withal, penetrated to the very corners of the dug-out.

"Do you ever feel afraid, Ryan?" he asked. "Funky, you know." Then, without waiting for an answer, he went on. "Heavens, I do feel afraid, sometimes. Out on listening patrol. It's hell for a man with an imagination, crawling out in the darkness between the lines. You hear the grass whispering, and the darkness in front of you may hide anything. An awful face covered with blood may rise up in front, a hand may come out and grasp you by the hair. The dead are lying around you, poor, quiet creatures, but you know that they're stronger than you are. I often wish I couldn't think; that I lacked imagination; that I was a clod of earth like that creature there."

Fitzgerald raised his finger, and pointed to a narrow-browed, red-faced man, named Bubb, who was rapping his idle fingers on an upturned mess-tin.

Bubb gazed at Fitzgerald and laughed.

"'Ear old Fitz," he exclaimed. "'E's as mad as they make 'em."

"No imagination there," said Fitzgerald with an air of finality. "He couldn't be afraid, that creature. No soul. I dare ten thousand times as much to overcome my fear as that man would dare to win the V.C. When I go out on listening patrol I am always furthest out. I feel if I'm a yard behind the front man he'll consider me a coward, so I get out a yard ahead of him, and I tremble all the time."

"Sing a song, Fitz," Bubb called out. "A good rousing song wiv 'air on't."

"I pay no heed to that creation, his plebian wit and yokel humour," muttered Fitzgerald, turning to Ryan. "But if you desire it——"

"Nothing would delight me more," Ryan replied.

"Give me a cigarette, and I'll sing you a song that I love very much," Fitzgerald said. "It was sung by the old women in the famine times when they were dying of starvation. You must picture the famine-stricken leaning over their turf fires and singing their songs of desolation. I think it was the turf fire that kept our race alive."

A strange glow overspread Fitzgerald's face, and he rose from his seat and sat down on a bench in a corner, and spread out his hands timorously towards an imaginary fire. He bent his head forward until it drooped almost to his knees, and his whole attitude took on a semblance of want and woe with an overpowering fear. Ryan gazed involuntarily as he waited for the song.

A long-drawn out, hardly audible note that wavered like a thread of smoke quivered out into the evil atmosphere of the apartment; it was followed by a second and a third. A strange effect was produced on all the listeners by the trembling voice of the singer. Bubb gaped stupidly, his dull eyes fixed on the roof, rubbing his chin with the fingers of his right hand. Ryan drew himself up and listened, fascinated. Fitzgerald's song was the song of a soul condemned to inevitable sorrow; there was not a relieving touch, not a glow of hope; it was the song of a lost soul.

Oh, the praties they are small
Over here,
Oh, the praties they are small
Over here,
The praties they are small,
And we ate them skins and all,
Aye, and long afore the Fall
Over here.

And God will pay no heed
Over here,
He never takes much heed
Over here,
And whenever He takes heed
Then he rots the pratie seed,
And sends other mouths to feed
Over here.

I wish I was a duck
Over here,
To be eating clay and muck
Over here,
I'd sooner—sooner—I'd sooner——

"My God, I've forgotten it, Ryan, forgotten the rest of the song!" Fitzgerald exclaimed, throwing his unlighted cigarette on the floor and gripping his hair with both hands as if to pull it out of his head. Then, as if thinking better of it, he brought both his hands to his sides and, rising, sat down on the original ammunition box, his whole face betokening extreme self-pity.

"My memory!" he exclaimed. "My memory! Why was I brought into being?"

A minute's silence followed; then an eager glow lit up Fitzgerald's face. A happy inspiration seemed to have seized hold of him. "Ryan!" he exclaimed in an eager voice. "Have you a cigarette to spare, Ryan?"

"Gorblimey!" laughed Bubb. "Listen to 'im. 'E's always on the ear-'ole fer fags, an' he throws 'arf of them away. 'E's not 'arf a nib, old Fitzgerald."

"Good Heavens, how can I endure remarks like that from a wretched Sassenach? I beg your pardon, Bubb," Fitzgerald exclaimed, gripping with both fingers the

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cigarette which Ryan had given him, and breaking it in two. "You don't understand me, Bubb, you can't. I don't bear you any malice, but I find you trying at times, very trying."

At that moment an orderly came to the door and shouted out: "D Company runner!"

"I'm D Company runner," Fitzgerald replied.

"Report to Headquarters immediately," said the orderly.

"I'm there," said Fitzgerald, turning to Ryan and asking: "Can I have another cigarette?"

He got another cigarette; placed it in his cap, and went out into the open and across to Headquarters dug-out. The Adjutant was inside sitting at the table, a cup of tea and a box of cigarettes in front of him. He knew Fitzgerald very well, having met him in civil life.

"I want you to go back to Sap 8 as quickly as you know how," said the Adjutant, fixing his eyes on the runner. "The young German has regained consciousness and he tells us that the enemy are going to blow up three mines under the front to-morrow morning at six. The men must withdraw to the second trench until further orders. I've tried to 'phone up, but can get no answer to my calls. The wire must be broken. Hand the message over to Captain Thorley or any other officer whom you may encounter. Report back here when you've done this. . . ."

He handed a sealed envelope to Fitzgerald and the runner went out into the night, the final words of the Adjutant ringing in his ears:

"Very important, remember, very important."

II.

Fitzgerald clambered up the side of the pit with difficulty; the chalk was frittering away and the man had very insecure purchase on his feet. When he crossed the rim he could see the line of battle, the star-shells flaring in the heavens, and the lurid flames of bursting explosives lighting up the darkness.

In front, a spinney where the trees were riven and shattered, took on strange shapes; the lifeless, ruined branches stretched outwards, as it were, in reproach and despair; the fallen trees lay on the ground rotting like corpses.

Fitzgerald entered the communication trench and hurried along, panting as he ran. Two shells swooped over his head, bursting with a vicious clatter in the field behind him. Others followed, pounding at the parapet like drunken gods. He could hear the splinters hitting the parados with a dull thud to the accompaniment of a thousand rifle bullets which tore at the suffering sandbags.

He entered the front line to find the men standing at their posts alert and ready. The enemy had become nasty, and were using an exceptionally heavy shell on the sector. It came along once every five minutes, but as yet it had burst wide.

"A nine-point-two," somebody remarked to Fitzgerald as he entered the first bay, adding: "And it doesn't 'arf send the dirt flyin' about. . . . We're waitin' for an attack."

"Any officers near here?" Fitzgerald asked.

"Officers?" said the man who had been speaking about the big shell. "Yes, Cap'n Thorley was about 'ere a minute ago; 'e—Gorblimey, there she comes again!"

Fitzgerald listened and heard "her" coming, crooning out the unknown. It was the big shell. Gathering volume it approached, an inevitable terror, a messenger of death. There was a hurried stampede to the nearest dug-out, and Fitzgerald found himself in the crush and carried forward into the dark recess of a deep shelter.

In the next few seconds he was conscious of many things—of a sudden fall to the soft, muddy floor, of a choking sensation in the throat, a monstrously futile effort to drag himself clear of the man who fell on top of him, of nervous laughter and fierce imprecations. Then he sank into forgetfulness. The shell had blown the dug-out in on its occupants.

III.

Four nights had passed; the dusk of the fifth evening clustered thickly round bay and traverse in Sap 8, and the figures of soldiers on watch assumed strange proportions in the gathering gloom. Overhead the greater part of the sky was covered with long, dark, grey clouds, and brilliant stars shone here and there between them. In front lay the enemy's trenches, behind them a ruined village stood, lit up by the glaring flare of a thousand star-shells. The air was close and warm, full of the sickly odour of the battlefield.

Captain Thorley came along the trench speaking to the men on sentry-go. He was a tall man, muscular of shoulder and sturdy of limb—a soldier every inch of him. At the present moment he had the air of a man worried about something. He stood for a moment at the entrance of a dug-out and spoke into the dark interior.

"Anybody in there?" he called out.

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"Yes, sir," came the answer, and a figure emerged into the open trench.

"Oh, it's you, Ryan," said Captain Thorley. "Trying to cook a bit of supper?"

"Exactly, sir," Ryan replied. "But everything is so damp. The wood won't light. Are we going to get relieved to-night?"

"If all goes well, we'll get out about midnight," said Thorley. "Meanwhile, we've got to keep close watch on the enemy's lines. That mine may go up at any time."

"How strange they did not send it up the other morning," Ryan remarked, alluding to the mine which the young German had spoken about at Battalion Headquarters. "Poor old Fitz suffered on account of it. He was in the midst of a song when he was called out by the Adjutant. The message was to be taken to you, sir, I believe. . . . Has no attempt been made to dig the bodies out of the dug-out?"

"What's the use of that?" said Thorley in a sad voice.

"They're buried deeply enough, God knows, and what more can be done? . . . Even if we wanted to dig them up, we have had no time, as you know yourself. The Germans tried to raid the sap just after the dug-out was blown to pieces; then we had to clear out at dawn to keep away from the mine that did not explode, and we've been shelled pretty severely since then."

"And will the mine ever be blown up?" asked Ryan.

"Perhaps it's reserved for the battalion that's relieving us," said Captain Thorley, with a smile, as he lit a cigarette.

"That's the dug-out which was blown in, isn't it?" asked Ryan, pointing to a portion of the traverse which had been blown down on the trench. The earth lay clumsily, a wooden beam and a bayonet sticking through it up into the air.

The Captain made no reply; his cigarette had gone out, and he relit it. Ryan gazed at the fallen dug-out, which was now vividly showing in the brilliant flare of a German star-shell, and he could see the light running from the boss to the point of the bayonet in delicate waves. As he watched he suddenly fancied that he saw the bayonet move as if shaken by an invisible hand. It swayed to the left, to the right, then to the left again.

"Sir!" Ryan called to Captain Thorley.

"What is it?" asked the Captain, turning round.

"See the bayonet sticking through the roof of the dug-out!" gasped Ryan. "It moved!"

"Nerves," said the Captain, with a laugh, "or maybe the light playing on it. . . . We all see queer things moving at times."

"But look! There it is again, moving!" whispered Ryan, whose eyes were fixed on the bayonet, lit up, as it was, by a dozen falling star-shells.

The Captain looked in the direction indicated by the outstretched trigger finger of the signaller, and his eyes fell on the bayonet moving backwards and forwards as if trying to free itself from the mud that encompassed it.

"Good Heavens! There's a man alive underneath the dug-out!" gasped Captain Thorley. "Buried for five days," he muttered. Turning to Ryan, he spoke rapidly. "He—they—all who are under must come out at once. Get a spade, Ryan. Warn half-a-dozen others. . . . Send a corporal along to report. . . . Great care must be taken, but the work has got to be done very quickly . . . so much depends. . . . Hurry up, Ryan, it's a matter of life and death."

IV.

Captain Thorley lay on the top of the fallen dug-out, digging down with his entrenching tool, clearing away the clay that clustered round the rifle and bayonet. The task was a delicate one. Any moment he might fall through on the entombed figures, and even his weight might cause the shelter to topple further in. It was evident that a certain amount of space existed beneath into which the fresh air had managed to effect an entrance. The bayonet now stood still; probably the person who was responsible for its movements had become unconscious again.

Captain Thorley worked eagerly, and a certain rapturous joy filled his being. "I'll get them out," he said to himself. "I will not be beaten."

Inch by inch he went deeper. He reached the back sight of the rifle, then the breech. But he could get no further. A stout wooden beam obstructed the way. He worked round the beam and put his hand through a hole on one side of it into a space beneath. Here his fingers rested on something soft and clammy, and he knew instinctively that it was a human body, whether alive or not he could not tell.

"Easy now," he cautioned himself. "We'll soon get the poor devil out."

But the labour presented greater difficulties than Thorley had anticipated. Several roof beams criss-crossed, making a wooden network which it was impossible to penetrate; to get the beams clear necessitated hard

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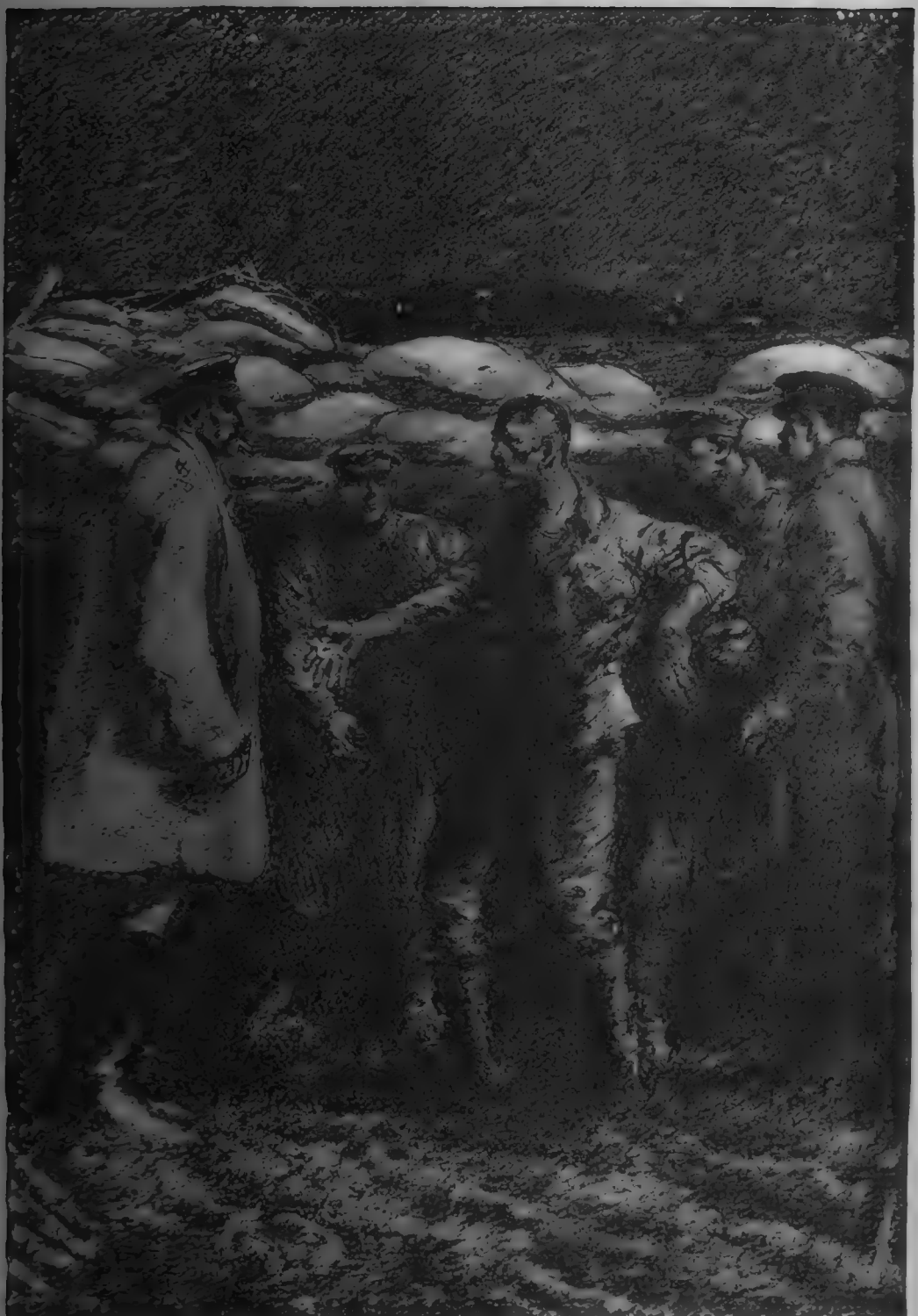

The man opened his hand and held out a piece of muddy paper. "The mine," he gasped. "Going up at dawn. All men to be withdrawn second trenches . . ." [*Page* 252, *col.* 2.]

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work on the fringes of the dug-out roof. Here the clay had to be cleared away in order to obtain purchase of the fallen rafters; and even when this was done, a more ticklish job followed—the removal of the beams. But it was done somehow, as most jobs are done in the trenches. The process of accommodation is an inherent faculty of the Army; the men adapt themselves to every occasion.

The *débris* was removed, the bodies uncovered. They were lifted out one by one—soft, flabby bundles of decaying flesh and ragged khaki. The first man's leg was gone; an arm of the second was severed from his body, the third man was dead, the fourth—— Thorley touched the fifth, and he saw him move his shoulders as if trying to throw something off.

"My God! this is the live man," he muttered, and looked at Ryan. "Get him out into the open trench and see that he gets plenty of air. . . . Five days buried! . . ."

The limp figure was lifted with a care almost reverent, carried along the trench and placed on a firestep in a bay. The soldiers who carried him looked at their burden when they laid him down, endeavouring to recognise which of their lost mates it was. But all to no purpose. The firestep was in darkness, the man's face was caked in clay, and not a distinctive feature was visible. One hand lay limply open, the other was tightly clenched.

Captain Thorley came round the traverse, a cigarette in his mouth. "The others are all dead, boys," he said gravely. "Is the man going to pull through? Who is he?"

"I cannot tell you," Ryan replied. "One cannot make sure."

Even as Ryan spoke, the man on the ground moaned a little, raised his hand, though evidently with great effort, and his lips moved. It seemed that he wanted to say something.

"What is it?" Thorley asked, stooping down. "What are you trying to say?"

For a moment there was no answer. Then suddenly the man scrambled to his feet, opened his eyes, and gazed round with a vacant stare.

"Where is Captain Thorley?" he asked in a dull, colourless voice.

"Here I am!" the Captain replied. "What can I do for you?"

The man opened his hand and held out a piece of muddy paper.

"The mine," he gasped. "Going up at dawn. All men to be withdrawn second trenches . . ."

He held out the message from Headquarters, his hand trembling as if stricken with palsy. Captain Thorley gripped the paper, and Fitzgerald, D Company runner, sank down again unconscious on the slushy floor of the trench.

Then a strange thing happened. The mine went up as Fitzgerald fell, but too far out to do any harm. The usual fight for the crater followed, and the Germans were unsuccessful. Many of their dead remained on the open when they were driven back to their own lines.

The battalion was relieved before dawn. Fitzgerald was taken away earlier, and recovered consciousness to find himself in hospital. His first action there was to jump out of bed and rush through the ward looking for Captain Thorley. He had an important message for the Captain. A mine was going up at dawn, and the boys had to retire to the second trenches.

But the nurses understood and brought him back to his bed, and treated him as if he were a little child. Being a man who had risen from the dead, he did not resent it; and when he spoke of those nurses as he told me the story of his adventures (he and I were at the same convalescent hospital), his eyes filled with tears of gratitude.

"I rose from the dead and found myself amongst the angels," he said with a smile.

"ATTENTION!"

All soldiers and sailors should turn to page 291, where they will find particulars of a simple competition. The prizes are presented by that charming actress, Miss Mabel Funston. Don't you want to win one?

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THE JOTTINGS OF A SUBALTERN.

II.—BETTY.

This month the Subaltern describes how he fell a victim to the charms of a fair lady he met in a railway carriage. After spending much of his leave acting as her devoted slave, he finds that once again he has been basely deceived.

LIFE is full of lost illusions. It comes as a revelation to me to find that Betty is a naughty girl.

I met Betty in a first-class railway carriage on the North West Southern and Eastern Railway, I, Lieutenant Cosmo Vernon Lacy of Ours, the 31st Pinkshires, the dear old die-hard Poppyshirts. I had wrung some leave from an unsympathetic Army and set forth from town to visit George Stapleton, one of the very best, invalided, who lives with his not unattractive sister at the Round House, Little Pethwick. It is an abode of peace and plenty that appealed to me after the rude simplicity of rough soldiers.

What with one thing and another I got to the station beastly late, and the porter feller pitched me neck and crop into the nearest "first." It happened by the grace of Providence to be a smoker; it happened also to contain her whom afterwards, and not so very long afterwards at that, I came to know as Betty.

She was sitting by the window opposite me, buried in a sixpenny weekly. Her tailoring was acutely perfect; she had the right luggage. She also had a perfect profile of the cheeky persuasion—one of those short, provoking noses, you know, and a little maddening mouth—and the most heavenly ankles. I couldn't help brooding over them—the ankles, I mean. Heaven bless those short skirts! She sat with one knee crossed over the other, revealing a vision of the most symmetrical black silk in the world and little patent shoes that must have cost a fortune. I s'pose I stared like a vulgar brute, for presently Betty glanced up and caught my eyes glued to those perfect ankles.

It was then I realised of what stuff she was made. A lesser damsel would have uncrossed the limbs, made a frantic snatch at her skirt, and tucked her feet under the seat of the carriage. Betty simply shot a little cold contemptuous glance at me that meant "Go to blazes!" and continued reading the sixpenny weekly.

I almost blushed. Then I said as calmly as possible:

"May I smoke a cigarette, please?"

A second time Betty's eyes met mine. Ice was not in it.

"Certainly you may. It is a smoking carriage," she retorted with pained politeness, and read on and on.

I called up all the dash of the Poppyshirts and persevered.

"Perhaps you would care for a cigarette yourself?" I hazarded, offering my gold case full of priceless Alexandrinides without a tremor.

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For a second I really thought Betty would bite me.

"You are very kind," she murmured, still with the cold storage manner. "I do not, unfortunately, accept cigarettes from strangers in railway carriages. No doubt you are harmless enough, but there are others."

I shook my head plaintively.

"I cannot possibly smoke alone," I said sadly. "These are very good cigarettes. We have a long journey before us. Why be cross? Why not be friendly? I am sure you have a kind heart. You are too beautiful not to be good as well——"

"My good ass," she interrupted, stretching out a little gloved hand, "if you are going on like this, for heaven's sake give me a cigarette, and then perhaps we shall have peace. You don't know how silly you are getting. Now give me a match as well. There! Now will you be quiet?"

I shall never see anything half so charming as Betty at 7 a.m., fresh as paint from a night's rest, sticking the dearest little teeth in the world into an apple.

"No," I said, "I have gone too far to give up. I want to know your name and tell you how ripping your clothes are and how lonely I am—going on a long journey to dull people. And I am sure you have a secret sorrow. Tell me about it. I would do anything to help you."

She smoked meditatively, laying aside the sixpenny weekly. I saw her low brow wrinkle in thought. Then she smiled and I have never seen anything more beautiful.

"My name is Betty, and I am very lonely," she murmured. "If you *could* cheer me up—what shall we talk about?"

"My name is Cosmo, and why are you lonely?" I gasped. "It seems so unnecessary."

Betty made a little face.

"I don't say I'm not admired to a certain extent and taken about and so on, nor have I lived without arousing a serious passion in the bosom of a man. But, Cosmo, dear, that is not enough. I want rich, beautiful Romance. I want someone to do ridiculous things on my account. That is the test of a man's love, Cosmo. When he no longer knows whether he is being ridiculous or not he is in the toils."

"I would be ridiculous or anything else for you, Betty," I said humbly.

"I wonder?" she murmured, and then added: "I am going to Slumberton. I have a cottage there."

"Then I will go to Slumberton as well and live at the pub and be your slave all day long," I exclaimed, and laughed the slightly reckless laugh of a man who takes a great resolve.

Betty considered me critically.

"A little foolish, but young and, perhaps, rather nice," she said as if to herself.

At Slumberton I put up at the "Green Man" and sent a wire to my servant in Town telling him to wire to George Stapleton in my name that I was laid-up with "flu." Slumberton is only fifteen miles from Little Pethwick, but I trusted to luck.

And then began that idyll of Betty, which I shall always consider one of the most fragrant spots in my various past. I wouldn't have kissed Betty because she

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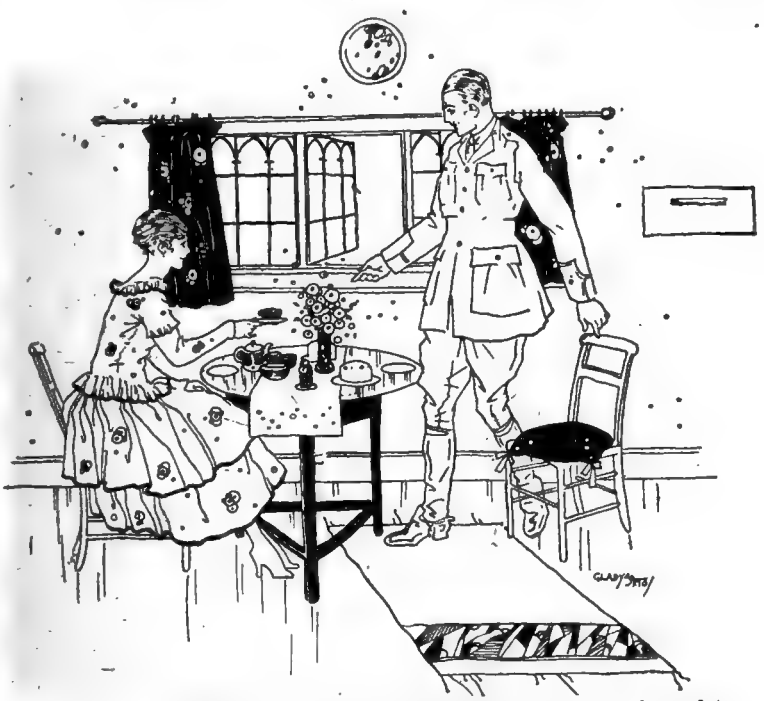
wouldn't have liked it, and a kiss would have broken the spell.

You see even from the first I recognised that Betty was different from the rest. She was, if you understand, an exclusive model; not one of those all of a pattern fluffy beauties turned out by a thoughtful Providence for the especial benefit of revue managers.

She was so adorably young and full of beans when she let herself go. We used to get up and go for walks while the dew was still on everything. I shall never see anything half so charming as Betty at 7 a.m., fresh as paint from a night's rest and her bath, sticking the dearest little teeth in the world into an apple. We used to tramp miles and miles all day and come home at the end to tea in Betty's cottage.



We used to tramp miles and miles all day and come home at the end to tea in Betty's cottage.

"I can't play to-morrow or any more," she said, looking very subdued.

The only thing about her I couldn't make out was the way she used to watch for the postman. She was always writing letters, too. She didn't wear a wedding-ring, so I took it she was engaged, and yet, if so, why did she always run about with me?

One night as we were having tea a telegram came for Betty. I watched her tear the envelope and read the message. Slowly the blood rose to her cheeks; she seemed suddenly to be lifted right out of the world into some heaven of her own.

"I can't play to-morrow or any more," she said, looking very subdued, "but you may come to tea to-morrow, only speaking as one pal to another, don't stop very long. Good-night."

She puzzled me a bit, but I knew she knew best, so I just gathered myself up and went.

The next day was Sunday. *Slumberton* seemed to ooze Sunday peace. I drifted down to the cottage at about 4.15 to find a man sitting near Betty, looking at her quietly and unobtrusively just as if he wanted to store up every detail of her to remember. He was a Major, and he had that look in the eyes that people get who have gone through Overseas.

Betty sat dreamily twisting a wedding-ring. "This is the safety valve, Jim," she said to the Major. Then she turned to me. "My

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husband," she explained, and there was something in the way she said it.

"I s'pose I've been a very bad girl," she went on, "but I could have screamed that day in the railway carriage, Cosmo. Some day perhaps you'll be married, and know what these separations mean. They eat your heart away, and make you dreadfully old."

The lines in the Major's face seemed to deepen a little. I felt the most awful ass.

"Every time Jim goes after leave I get him to take off my ring and put it away. It's a mockery when one's alone. When he comes back he puts it on again, and we try to live our few little days twice over to make them go farther."

Her voice shook, and the Major looked out of the window.

"And when I met you," went on Betty to me, "I did suddenly want to be young again, and play and forget the war. And you were a very nice boy and helped me cleverly. I think you understood a little."

I cleared my throat and stood up.

"I daresay you haven't very long leave, sir," I said. "I'll be going if I may."

I tell you I was sorry for those two.

The Major got up and held out his hand.

"Thank you for helping my best friend," he said. "Good-night and good luck."

He turned back to the fire, and I saw Betty's face as she lifted it to his. She never looked like that for me.

* * * * *

In the long run I had quite a good time with George Stapleton and his sister. But I like to think I may have have been of some use to Betty. There are not many like Betty.

(Another episode in the Subaltern's light-hearted career appears next month.)

PEGGY.

There is lots of gurls in the village, but it's Peggy as lives next door
Is the only gurl for a chap like me—an' Peggy is only four,
An' I'm a man of eight-and-a-half—but Peggy must have her way—
For women is all contrary things, as I've heard my father say.

So I'm often around at Peggy's, an' I guess that my gurl knows why,
For she takes the toffee, an' smiles so sweet—but Peggy's a gurl—and shy;
So she says she won't have a beau at all, unless he can think an' think,
And find how to teach the pigs to fly, an' turn all the seas to ink!

I ran straight home to the old farm-yard, an' I crawled right inter the sty,
But our pigs is silly an' girt an' fat, and I guess they couldn't fly.
Then I thinks: "P'r'aps the great big ocean might have turned into ink, maybe—"
(For I wanted Peggy so much)—but no! 'twas salt as salt could be!

I went right back to Peggy, my gurl, an' I told her the way things were,
An' I told her to fix on somethin' else, as sharp as ever I dare;
And that's why I'm waitin', idle-like—'tis the only thing I can do—
For Peggy says she'll walk out with me—when the big round moon turns blue!

G. N.

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Photo *Elwin Neame.*

Miss Eveline Laurie believes that husbands and wives will appreciate each other far more after the war than they did before.

WILL THE WAR ALTER MARRIAGE?

By Eveline Laurie.

I have ventured to ask Miss Eveline Laurie, who played so charmingly in *Bric-à-Brac*, to discuss the weighty question propounded in the title. I think she has dealt very faithfully with it, and I am sure you will agree.—Ed. R.M.

This is indeed a great question.

However, the Editor asked me to discuss it, and as someone says somewhere—I believe in a play called *The Virgin Goddess*—"Why should I fear who never feared before?" And although it is a very serious topic I hope everyone will forgive me if I don't treat it too seriously.

Perhaps some people may ask: "Why should the war alter marriage?" Well, the war has altered very nearly everything, and I can't see how marriage can escape. Moreover,

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this European disagreement has evolved a new sort of marriage—the war marriage. Young men come home on eight days' leave, fall in love, are married, depart on a brief honeymoon, and are back at the Front all, as it were, in a breath. To this extent the war *has* altered marriage already.

But, as I understand it—and I hope you do, too—I am writing about the marriages which were in existence when war broke out Will it alter them?

Photos *Elwin Neame.*

Many husbands who went away believing their wives were content with being merely domestic or decorative or both——

——will return to find them fully fledged wage-earners, grappling with problems hitherto the monopoly of men.

As Sir Roger de Coverley observed long ago, there is much to be said on both sides. In spite of this, I will dare to answer the question in the affirmative. I say undoubtedly it will. And now to support my opinion.

It can't be denied that very many marriages have always been proprietary affairs with the husband as proprietor. He financed them; and that always gave him the last word in any argument. If you listened to the conversation

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among an average gathering of married women you noticed such catch-phrases as these over and over again: "My husband says . . ." "Jim would never hear of my doing that. . . ." "We always go to Margate. Arthur says the air there is so bracing. . . ." "I should never dare to put colonial mutton on the table. My husband wouldn't touch it."

Again, if you read the penny papers devoted to, or supposed to be devoted to, women's interests, what seem to be the main motives in women's lives? As far as I can gather, these are doing something rather more cheaply than the husband imagines it can be done in order to make a little on the housekeeping, and going in for various propitiatory practices so as to keep Bill or Harry in a good temper. In the first case you give him what is supposed to be a pudding, but is in reality the toast left at yesterday's breakfast skilfully treated; result, half the price of a pair of silk stockings. In the second you run to him with slippers and a loving, bright smile, at the same time holding your tongue, when he comes in weary from work. Result, approving words and perhaps a kiss after dinner.

On the other hand, judging from the same evidence, the husband seems to take his wife for granted. He picks her up and sets her down according to his moods. He doesn't expect her to express any opinion in the one case or the other. She is like the niece and widowed Ma of Captain Reece, who

> "Attended there as they were bid;
> It was their duty, and they did."

Perhaps I might say here that I am not married. I speak from observation.

Well, now, this is the sort of marriage the war is going to alter. All these good ladies who used to tell one another what their husbands said in order to make one another's flesh creep deliciously over the awful spectacle of Arthur, majestic in his rage, refusing to touch colonial mutton—these ladies have been left to themselves

The husband's sojourn in the Army will make him more appreciative of his wife's domestic virtues as well as of her womanly charm——

Photos Elwin Neame.

——while she will recognise that but for men like him her light-hearted days would be over, and her comfortable home a thing of the past.

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while Arthur and Co. are at the Front, where there is perhaps no colonial mutton for them to refuse to touch. And it may have dawned on these wives that there is a certain abstruse pleasure in being able to call one's soul one's own for a week or two.

Moreover, those mysterious functions no wife's little head could ever understand, such as paying the rent and rates and insurance, have all devolved on the Mrs. Arthurs of this happy land. They have had a say, for the first time in many cases, in the management of their own children; they have, in a word, achieved a temporary freedom from the prison of the average marriage; they have tasted blood.

And who is going to imprison them again? Will the curtest refusal of colonial mutton ever reduce them to the state in which they were? I think not.

Many a married woman has been driven by stress of war-time prices into earning money. If she had ever suggested to Augustus in the long dead days of peace that she *could* earn money, his scornful laughter would have made the very curtain rings clash together in mockery. Little Maisie earn money? Ha, ha! Who would pay her anything? What could her little feather head grapple with? That was a good joke, indeed it was!

Well. Maisie has earned money nevertheless in many, many instances. And the point is, she will want to go on earning it after the war, for the sake of being independent.

Maisie, having seen that she could keep her end up in war-time while Augustus was away, will never look up at him with folded hands of admiration again in peace-time. If the average husband only knew it, he is more of a bugbear than a blessing in the ordinary way, for which food, a roof, and a more or less adequate dress allowance do not altogether make up. And Augustus, returning and feeling rather more splendid than when he went away, will proceed to encounter a certain shock to his pride.

It is just possible, however, that his sojourn in the Army, where, perhaps, he had to do his own scrubbing and mend his own socks, may have made him more appreciative of his little partner's—nominally she was a partner—efforts in the past. And between training, hardships, and joy at being in his own home among his own things once more, he may be a more attractive person to live with than he was.

On the other hand, Maisie will realise that, if it were not for men like her husband, her home would probably have disappeared and Hun rule would be prevalent in England, and so she will do all she can to show him her gratitude by making his home as happy and comfortable as is within her power.

This is my one fear when I consider, as the Editor asked me to, the question of these altered marriages: I fear that a very small amount of repentance on the side of Augustus, looked at by Maisie through the magnifying-glass of a woman's love and the everlasting patience of the average wife, will suffice to neutralise her newly-won independence and bring things back to their former condition.

But I do hope not. I hate to see opportunities wasted, and I hate to see men spoilt; they are dears in their single days, full of romance, tactful, admiring, generous. It's only when they're married that they seem to shed all this, as far as their wives are concerned, in such a little, little while.

As for men being allowed more than one wife at a time after the war, I say emphatically, NO! I'm quite sure no English woman would marry knowing she had to share her husband with someone else. England would soon be in a state of civil war—first wives *versus* second!

The idea of men being allowed more than one wife at a time is a startling and impracticable one, for no Englishwoman would share her husband with another.

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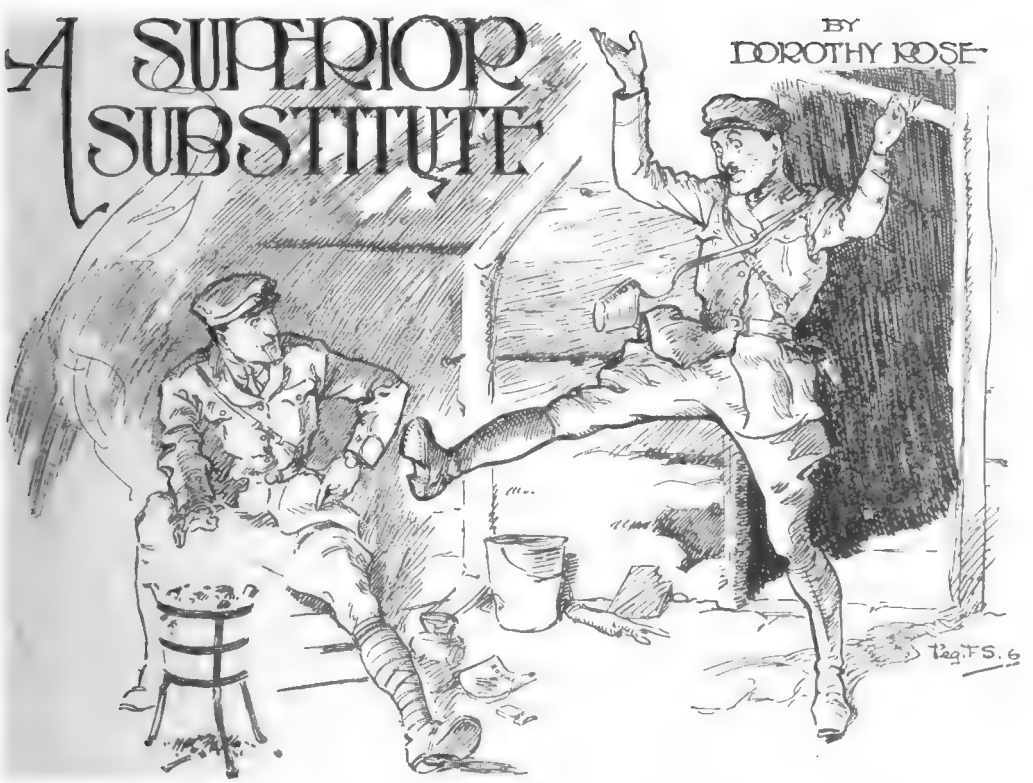
A SUPERIOR SUBSTITUTE

BY DOROTHY ROSE



"Man dreams of fame, while woman wakes to love"

I.

A Christmas Conspiracy.

"CHEERO! Got my Christmas leave, old thing!" Lieutenant the Hon. Jack Hunter crashed into the shell-scarred remains of what had once been a spacious barn with the velocity of a bursting shell. "Wangled it somehow, though I didn't silence a German battery and kill six gunners single-handed," he added with a mischievous grin.

"Don't be a fool, Jack!" Leigh's comment on this disrespectful allusion to the feat which had earned him special leave and the prospect of some high award was curt and to the point. He looked up from the upturned sugar-box on which he was sitting with the deliberation which was such a contrast to the restless energy of his companion.

"Only want a muslin skirt and a pair of wings and you'd make a pantomime fairy," he added, for Jack was waltzing round in sheer exuberance of spirits, humming "A Broken Doll" exactly three semitones flat.

"All very well for you getting leave," Kenneth jerked out as Jack subsided on to the sugar-box beside him. "Pretty rotten Christmas I shall have now those precious cousins of mine have got measles. 'All dressed-up and nowhere to go' about sums up my position!"

"Poor beggar!" Jack proferred an ornate cigarette-case and stared in rapt contemplation at the gaping roof. "Trouble with me is just the other way. Never dreamt I'd pull it off, and promised to spend my Christmas leave with 'em both. Joan and Barbara, you know! Don't want to offend 'em. Joan's cakes are simply luscious, and I only want twenty-three more mufflers from Barbara and I shall have enough for a knitted quilt."

"And you've promised both those fair young flowers to kiss them under the mistletoe and put oranges and nuts in their stockings! I never knew till this minute to what depths of depravity a man could sink!" observed Kenneth piously.

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"Oh, dry up!" Lieutenant Hunter's efforts to dislodge his companion failing, he turned away and gazed moodily at his muddy boots. "Can't you see what a devilish fix I'm in?"

"Toss up!" Kenneth's blue eyes twinkled, as he puffed with unimpaired serenity at a cigarette.

"*Toss up!*" Jack drew from his pocket a bulging letter-case and took out two photographs, which he regarded with melancholy admiration. "Look at 'em! Ever see such peaches? And he says 'toss up!'"

With an adroit movement Lieutenant Leigh possessed himself of one of the photos and regarded it attentively.

"Jolly fine girl!" he said warmly. "Haven't got a sample of her hair, have you, old man? Bet you it's golden-brown, and eyes to match! Give me Barbara!"

"Well, you've got her, haven't you?" retorted the other with some asperity. "If you're so struck on her, it's a pity—— Why, 'pon my soul, it's the very thing!" he finished, jumping to his feet in his excitement.

Kenneth regarded him with a look of mock commiseration. "There's a good asylum at Hanwell," he suggested. "I'll bring you tobacco on visiting days."

"Don't be an ass, Ken," was the polite rejoinder, "and try and show a little decent gratitude when I'm planning for your good. I've got two invitations, and you haven't any. Simple as a, b, c. Neither of the girls has seen us—all done by correspondence—lonely young officer 'touch.' All you've got to do is to call yourself Lieutenant Hunter, and the thing's done!"

"So am I—if I'm found out," observed Kenneth, rising and stretching himself in leisurely fashion.

"Oh, be a sport!" Jack's round, boyish face grew absurdly downcast. "You know all my horrid past, and you can babble rubbish about life at the Front as well as I can."

"Seems a bit low-down." Lieutenant Leigh's blue eyes were fixed on a patch of grey sky that showed through the yawning hole that had once been a window. "But, after all, a hotel Christmas *is* a rotten affair!" He looked at the photo which he still held in his hand. "Jove! She *is* a daisy! Jack, old boy, I'll take it on and hang the consequences."

Jack smote him tempestuously on the back. "Good man!" he exclaimed. "Now we'll go and write 'em the glad tidings."

II.

Regarding Complications.

A wintry sun was sinking in a ball of ruby fire behind the black firs that surrounded the country station when Kenneth Leigh alighted from the train. The dreamy peace of twilight rested over the Buckinghamshire lanes as he bowled along in the neat grey motor which had met him at the station. As they turned in through the gateway he caught a glimpse of red-shaded lights gleaming from the low, white, half-timbered house, as though in welcome, and mingled with his boyish excitement at his escapade came a sudden twinge of self-reproach. It vanished as the hall door was flung open and he stepped into a wainscoted hall, where a blazing fire leapt up a wide chimney, softening the dim blues and reds of rugs and curtains, and falling fitfully on the face of a girl who rose from the couch to greet him.

"You're Jack, aren't you?" Barbara's brown eyes met his frankly. "I *am* glad to see you, but do you know, you aren't a bit like I expected." She regarded him critically as he took off his coat, and he had time to note the golden lights in her wavy brown hair, the little, straight nose, and the mutinous curve of her chin.

"I'm awfully sorry, but beauty doesn't run in the family," said Kenneth, confronting her on the rug. "May I ask wherein you are disappointed?"

"I didn't say I was," laughed Barbara, sitting down on the blue-cushioned settee and planting a pair of dainty suède-shod feet on the wide fender. "I thought somehow from your letters you were ridiculously young and something like an escaped tornado."

"Shows how deceptive letters are!" Kenneth sat down beside her, smiling at her apt summing-up of the happy-go-lucky Jack. "I assure you I have been thoroughly well brought up."

Barbara laughed gleefully, nursing her knee, and looking in her white silk shirt and pleated skirt ridiculously young herself. "I think we shall be good pals," she said. "And now do tell me how the war's getting on, and don't skip anything!"

They were still talking when tea arrived, and together they wrought great havoc among the crumpets and cakes.

By the time they parted to dress for dinner Kenneth felt, to use his own expression, "as if they had been friends since their bib days."

Dinner was a delightful meal. Mr. Dawn was no less hospitable than his daughter. Grey-haired and alert, his shrewd eyes and determined mouth were typical of the man who had climbed to the head of one of the biggest engineering firms in the country. He was essentially a man who could control men, but even he had his weak spot, as

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Kenneth speedily discovered by the softening of his rugged face when he turned to Barbara, a delectable vision in a pale pink frock which might have been born in Bond Street, but looked far more like a creation of fairyland.

It was not until Barbara had flitted up to bed like a rose-pink butterfly against the sepia shadows of the oaken staircase that Kenneth, smoking a last cigarette in the library with his host, realised how entirely Joseph Dawn's hopes were wrapped up and centred in his beautiful daughter.

"I'm bound up in Barbara," he said. "She'd knock the stuffing out of lots of society beauties, and she's a good girl—straight as a die, and a thorough little sportswoman."

"Jove! She is." The young officer agreed with emphasis. His blue eyes harboured nothing but contentment; he was glad, unfeignedly glad, he had chosen Barbara.

"I've got great hopes for Barbara," continued his host, leaning back in his leather-covered chair and puffing reflectively at his pipe. "She's all I have now—now Hugh's gone—my only son, you know—killed at Festubert; Barbara told you, perhaps. He was going to be my right hand—a clever lad and had the engineering brain. I want my little girl to marry well, to have the rank and position her old father never had. I'm a self-made man, and I'm not ashamed of it, but I've had some rough knocks. I want Barbara safeguarded. But she's an obstinate little puss!"

"Got ideas of her own on the subject, I suppose?" remarked Lieutenant Leigh, secretly amused at the old man's ingenuous confidence.

"That's it!" Joseph Dawn's piercing grey eyes narrowed as he knocked out his pipe against the blue tiles in the fireplace. "There's Lord Ponting now, owns a big estate adjoining this; good family, money, decent-looking chap, pink cheeks, yellow moustache, but Barbara won't look at him. Says she doesn't like his colour-scheme."

Kenneth threw back his fair head and roared.

"It would be a splendid match. It's an old family," mused the old gentleman. "Not over robust, perhaps, and a bit on the kid glove side, but one can't have everything——" He broke off suddenly, and Kenneth felt his searching gaze focused on himself. It was only then that it struck him that, as the Hon. Jack Hunter, he might fulfil his host's requirements, and be regarded by him as a possible substitute for the despised Lord Ponting. A sense of elation stole over him at the thought, only to be replaced by one of depression, as he remembered that as Lieutenant Leigh, with only £200 a year of his own and an intimate knowledge and love of machinery, he was, so to speak, entirely off the matrimonial map.

The possibility of complications ensuing as the result of his masquerade did not prevent Kenneth sleeping as only one divorced for months from the luxuries of a bed can sleep. He came down to find Barbara waiting breakfast in the morning-room, pink-cheeked and fresh as paint, with a smile as bright as the December sunshine that streamed in through the big diamond-paned windows. Mr. Dawn, hard-working now as in his youth, had already left for the station *en route* for town.

It was Barbara's idea that they should have an impromptu dance on Boxing Day, and invite some two dozen congenial spirits to make merry. It was Kenneth's suggestion that he should help write the invitations, an offer which nearly led to his downfall when Barbara came to stamp the envelopes.

"Do you keep one style of handwriting for the Front and one for home use, or have you studied the art of forgery in your spare moments?" she inquired mischievously, as she examined an envelope with critical eyes.

Kenneth, mentally kicking himself for not trying to emulate Jack's extremely illegible hand, plunged wildly into the first excuse that offered.

"It's impossible to write decently out there, you know. This is my copy-book hand. It's sheer agony to do it, but it can be done among propitious surroundings. Don't know how you managed to make head nor tail of my scrawls, 'pon my word!"

"It *was* difficult." A little smile played about Barbara's mouth as she dealt with a reluctant stamp. "I almost wish," she added, "that you'd written Lord Ponting's in your Flanders writing, for he certainly would not have been able to read it."

"And don't you want him to come?"

Kenneth's clean-cut young face woke to extreme animation as he thumped down the flap of an envelope with a muscular brown fist.

"Lord Ponting," said Barbara, speaking in a detached way, her pretty head on one side, "has the complexion of a just-bathed baby and a canary-coloured moustache. He dances divinely, and in pre-war days was an authority on spats. He is perfectly fit, and he wears red tabs on his uniform."

"Staff job?" queried Kenneth, rejoicing that his own complexion was a resplendent tan and his hair had no tinge of canary in its fairness.

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"Staff job," assented Barbara gravely, with a significance that showed she had her own ideas about young men who adorned the War Office when they were quite capable of going on Active Service.

III.

The Secret Comes Out.

Christmas Day was as near perfection as any day could be to the infatuated young man, though an occasional twinge of anxiety at the thought of his false position did assail him as he realised that assuredly Barbara was for him the only girl in the world. That she liked him as a pal, he knew; something—her blush when she thanked him for the casket of chocolate, the soft clinging of her fingers when he helped her out of the car, whispered of nearer and more intimate feelings. Would they be the same if she knew he was not the heir to estates and wealth? Was her love—if love it was—for the Hon. Jack Hunter, only nephew of the Earl of Thatcham, or was it perchance for himself, Kenneth Leigh, undowered by the gods, possessed only of two strong hands and a keen brain?

Kenneth had come to no solution of the problem when the next evening he drifted to the gates of Paradise with Barbara in his arms to the haunting melody of *Valse Amoureuse.*

Barbara in a bunchy white chiffon, with pearls about her slim bare neck, had an elusive will-o'-the-wisp charm that stirred him to a thirst for conquest. The sight of Lord Ponting, smug, and with the futile self-assurance of a perky cock sparrow, brought a fighting light to his blue eyes and increased his longing to sweep Barbara into his arms and hold her there for ever.

He was sitting in an alcove waiting till he might claim his next dance with Barbara when she came to him. Her cheeks were carnation pink, her brown eyes held a blazing fire of resentment, though her lips quivered pitifully. Kenneth sprang to meet her, and she clung to his hand with a gasp like that of a hunted animal. Very gently he put her on to the settee and sat down beside her.

"Now," he said, "tell me!" There was something very straight and compelling about him as he sat there, her fingers still held protectingly in his, something clean-souled, untainted, magnificently youthful and confident.

"It was Lord Ponting!" Barbara crumpled her wisp of a handkerchief nervously, "he kissed me under the mistletoe—he wouldn't let me go—I hate him. I told him so, and then—he said he'd make me pay for my rude speech, and he kissed me again. Oh, if only you'd been there!"

And at that Kenneth's heart took fire, all his manhood rose to meet the call upon his chivalry; he remembered nothing in the world but that Barbara had wanted him. His arms went round her, and as she leant her head against his shoulder he tasted the treasure of the gods and was content.

"I love you," he said, when they drifted from their rainbow web of happiness to earth again. "I'm not rich, kiddie, and I haven't rank or position, but——"

She laid her hand against his lips in gentle interruption.

"You're as rich as Lord Ponting," she said, "and you have a title—not that it matters, because I love you, and that is all that counts—it's only Dad—he isn't really worldly, but it will count with him, bless his heart!"

And with her words Kenneth fell from the clouds and realised that he must pay for his golden moments, must confess his deception even though it meant losing her for ever. Instinctively his arm tightened round her slim shoulders and a fighting light leapt to the clear blue of his eyes.

"Barbara"—the word was a caress.

"Well, upon my soul!" a reverberating voice broke in upon them, and Mr. Dawn stood beside the palms at the entrance to the alcove, his shrewd, alert face a mixture of amazement and inquiry. "You look very happy," he added somewhat lamely.

"We are!" Barbara beamed at him as she leant confidingly against Kenneth's broad shoulder, the while that young man racked his brain as to the best means of making the inevitable disclosure.

"You don't mean——?" Mr. Dawn looked inquiringly from one to the other, a smile of approval hovering about his austere face.

"Yes, we do. We're engaged." Barbara laid a possessive hand on Kenneth's khaki sleeve. "It's a beautiful world, Dad, darling," she said softly.

"And Lord Ponting?"

Barbara dealt with his lordship briefly and with decision. "I'd rather die than marry him," she asserted firmly. "Jack's a perfect dear, and if you insist on a title, what's the matter with the Hon. Jack Hunter?"

"Nothing, my dear, nothing." Pride and affection softened Mr. Dawn's thin features as Barbara rose and slipped a hand through his arm. "I'm delighted. You're a lucky beggar, young man—my little girl is one in a thousand."

"She is!" Kenneth had risen, and was standing before them, one muscular hand gripping the back of the settee, joy and bewilderment struggling for mastery in his

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bronzed boyish face. For the moment he could think of nothing, remember nothing but that Barbara loved him; the glory of the moment was upon him. He could not mar its memory by confession, and while he hesitated he was lost, for the band struck up another waltz and the sound of voices proclaimed the arrival of Barbara's partner.

That night Kenneth's sleep was of the most fitful, and when the grey wintry dawn crept into his room he faced the matter squarely and resolved that, come what might, he would make a clean breast of things both to Barbara and her adoring father.

The sight of Barbara presiding with pretty importance behind the coffee-urn strengthened his resolution, and as he bent to claim his rights as a lover and she raised a sparkling face, he resolved that it should be a fight to the death against the barrier of her father's ambition.

"Eight new V.C.'s," announced Barbara, glancing at the picture paper beside her plate, as Kenneth fortified himself for the struggle to come with eggs and bacon. "Such dears, too—and"—she glanced up at him incredulously, then back at the picture—"here's one who's the living image of you—straight nose, masterful chin, and all. Look!"

She passed him the paper, and rose to look over his shoulder, as Kenneth stared with slowly dawning comprehension at a picture of himself, under which was printed "Lieutenant Kenneth Leigh, V.C., who, single-handed, attacked and silenced an enemy battery, killing three gunners with his own hands."

"Have you got a twin brother masquerading under another name?" she asked, a gleam of mischief lighting up her brown eyes.

Kenneth turned to her a face on which delight, relief, and bewilderment struggled for mastery. The secret was out; here was the opening he wanted. He gripped the hand which rested on his shoulder, and, with her slim fingers in his, he told her all.

"Where they got the photo. from Heaven alone knows," he finished, "but there it is. I don't know if you'll ever forgive me, but—it was your photograph decided me. I simply

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had to know you somehow, and I was pining for a real home Christmas. I ought to be ashamed of myself, but somehow I'm not. It's been too utterly glorious. Only"—he rose to his feet as Barbara wandered over to the chintz-cushioned window-seat—"I've won you under false pretences. I'm not the Hon. Jack Hunter; I have no rank or position and little money; I can't give you luxuries, but I can give you love, and in time, please God! all other things as well. What do you say, Barbara?"

He stood before her, his boyish face set and dominating; there was about him the intense, purposeful look that Barbara fancied he must have worn when he put the guns out of action. Her two hands gripped the edge of the window-seat, her lips parted in a tremulous smile as she raised pansy-brown eyes to his bronzed young face.

"You've forgotten one thing," she said softly, "the greatest thing of all, save love. Your V.C.—'For Valour,' you know. What more could any woman want?"

"Then it isn't going to make any difference!" Kenneth's voice had all the old boyish ring in it. "You love me all the same, though I don't belong to 'the stately homes of England,' and I'm not the Hon. Jack and heir to an earldom?"

"Of course I do! It's you I love, not your house in Park Lane and your limousine, and besides," a smile hovered round the corners of her mouth, "I knew all the time who you were. I was never under any delusion."

And at this amazing statement Kenneth sank down on the window-seat, and, seizing her hands, turned her laughing face to his.

"Explain, please!" he commanded, blue-eyed and masterful, and Barbara proceeded.

"It's like this. Joan and I are old school chums; she was staying here when she first took Jack on, and as he asked for two cor-

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respondents, we decided to share him. We agreed not to let on as that would have spoilt the fun. It was just for fun, too, that we both invited him for Christmas. You can imagine our amazement when he accepted both invitations!

"We knew one of you wouldn't be genuine. I suspected you at once; you seemed far too sane and sensible to have written such scatter-brain letters as Jack did. He'd told us about a pal called Kenneth, and when I happened to notice 'K. L.' on your cigarette-case that decided it, that and your different handwriting. Joan had no suspicious facts to report, so I felt sure you were the substitute. And I knew you weren't wealthy, because Jack, who's a most confiding soul, told us all about your engineering and how ambitious you were to succeed. So it was you, you, you all the time, and never your money," she finished softly.

"Bless you, darling!" Kenneth bent and tilted her face to his. "But now you've forgiven me, there's still your father to be squared. Will he give up his cherished plans and ambitions and give me a chance to make a home worthy of you?"

"I think he will. He thinks a lot of rank and money, but he thinks even more of courage. Leave Dad to me—I pin my faith on the V.C.," said Barbara, with a hopeful smile.

It was in the library after dinner that Barbara introduced the picture to her father's notice, and, perched on the arm of his chair, explained everything.

"Well, of all the impudent young devils, he's one!" boomed Mr. Dawn explosively, but with an appreciative twinkle in his eye which heartened his young daughter considerably.

"Exactly!" agreed Barabara demurely. "If he wasn't he wouldn't have won the V.C., nor me either," she added as Kenneth came into the room.

"And what have you got to say for yourself, young man?" demanded Barbara's father, rising, and standing with his back to the fire, his shrewd face softening in spite of himself as the young officer slid an arm round Barbara's waist.

"Only that I love Barbara, and she's promised to wait for me," returned Kenneth serenely. "With £200 a year of my own, my training as an engineer, and a future father-in-law who is a power in the engineering world, I shan't have to keep her waiting long," he finished with an appealing grin.

"What did I tell you, Barbara?" Her father struggled unsuccessfully to keep up his wrathful attitude. "If you're bent on marrying such an impudent young devil, I suppose you must. If cheek is worth anything, he'll get on. I'm getting older"—his voice lost its resentful note—"Hugh's gone, and if Kenneth's worth his salt he shall have his chance with me. And, anyhow," he held out his hand, "I'm inclined to think a V.C. is a superior substitute for a title, so take her, my boy, and be good to her."

"I will," replied Kenneth firmly. "Are there any engagement rings nearer than London?"

THE DREAMER.

Girl with the dreaming eyes—
What do you see as you lie
Watching the clouds float by
Touched by the sun's last gleams?
The world was not made for dreams,
So how can you look so wise,
Girl with the dreaming eyes?

Girl with the dreaming eyes—
Lone on the wind-swept cliff,
With your gaze on a white-sailed skiff
And your chin cupped in your hands—
Is your soul in the Golden Lands?
But dreams only end in sighs,
Girl with the dreaming eyes.

Girl with the dreaming eyes—
Though you dream till the years grow old,
Dreams will not win you gold,
None of the things worth while—
So how can your soft lips smile?
Yet—smiling—you look so wise!
Girl with the dreaming eyes.

Gwen Nisbet.

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THE FAILURE.

By Owen Oliver.

"She for him had given
Her all on earth, and more than all in
Heaven."

Nan.

I SHALL have been married a year to-morrow. I found out five minutes ago that I have been a failure. My husband will find out in a few hours. His children have bought a wedding-present, but it is *only for him!*

He will make excuses for me, put his big arm round me and kiss me and say that I have brightened life for him. That is true, I know, or I should die of shame; but he will not be able to deny that I have not made his home as happy as it would have been if he had married a sensible, capable woman instead of a dreamy girl who is always writing, writing, writing, and whose greatest joy, next to being with him and doing things for him and his, is selling a story.

They are poor, commonplace little stories, and the money they fetch does not really matter to us, because Frank is a prosperous man. Sometimes I am selfish enough to wish that he were poor, so that I could be a help to him. I love him very, very much; more than I can write even, and I can write things better than I can say them.

It was through Frank that I first took to writing. I always loved him from the time I was a tiny girl, and made up stories about myself and him. I did not trouble much then about his being married, because his wife lived abroad and only the children with him, and he often took me out with them. When I grew older and realised what my affection for him meant—it was about the time when I put up my hair—I knew that real life did not hold what I wanted, and I liked my story-world better.

So I wrote and wrote and wrote. When I came to be twenty-five I had written hundreds of tales, and sold 127. I numbered them in a little book. *He* gave me the book and showed me how to keep my accounts, and advised me in the business part of it. I could never have managed that properly myself. My mother said I was a baby in everything except my stories, and I knew I was very childish in many things. I suppose it was because I did not go out into the world and grow up, and men did not interest me except him. He called me "Baby Nan." I felt that he liked me very much, though we never spoke of it till the time I am going to write about.

It was three days after I was twenty-five, and I was sitting in my study writing with the gold fountain-pen that he had given me on my birthday. I heard his voice in the

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hall asking for me. I kissed the pen and laid it on the desk, and was going down to meet him; and then I heard his step on the stairs and waited. He took *both* my hands when he came in—he had never done that before—and he kissed me, and he had only done that on birthdays and special occasions.

"Little Nan," he said, looking down at me—I scarcely reach his shoulder; he is a splendid big fellow and quite boyish in his ways and looks—"I want to prepare you for a shock. Sit down, dear." He put me gently in my desk chair. "You know that I have *not seen* my wife for many years. I had *news of* her to-day. It happened two months ago. . . . She has passed away."

I did not quite faint, I think, but when next I remember he was giving me some water. His arm was round me, and my head was against his coat, where it had always wanted to be.

He kissed me.

"We have known what we couldn't say for many years," he whispered, "haven't we, Nan? We love each other dearly."

"Yes," I owned, and then I kissed him. "Yes!" I said again.

"You will be my little wife soon?" he begged. "My darling!"

"I will be your wife, dear," I answered, "but it mustn't be soon."

"I am getting old, dear," he pleaded. "Forty-five; not too many years to be your lover. I have been hungry for you a long time."

"I have been hungry, too!" I confessed. "Sometimes I think I have been very hungry, Frank. It isn't that I don't want to. Some day I will, of course; only—there are other people, you see, darling."

"She has been dead to me these many years, Nan; and what does it matter to us what other people say? I don't think anyone who knows the facts will hold that we ought to wait."

"I meant your children, Frank," I explained. "They won't really like it ever; and just now—it isn't that *I* want to wait."

Frank.

"Don't you, sweetheart?" He pressed me close. "I don't think the children will expect me to wait long. Their mother was nothing but a name to them, and they are sensible, clever children; older than their ages."

"Yes," I agreed, "and I—you call me Baby Nan! I am not old and not clever. They will think I am too young and silly."

"They will think you are what their father wants," he assured me, "and they will wish him to be happy. You must not fancy that because they are not demonstrative they do not care very deeply for me. They do."

"Ah!" I cried. "So do I! But they won't like it, dear, if you tell them at once. Perhaps if they find out gradually, and see that it makes you happy, and that I am not so foolish as they thought—Miss Peter Pan will begin to grow up now!—they won't mind so much! Don't tell them yet."

He did not tell them, but they noticed us; and one afternoon, a fortnight afterwards, Maud, his eldest daughter, came round to call on me. She was just twenty then, tall and stately and fair, with clear-cut, handsome features. She was clever and reserved, quiet-spoken and strong-willed; very courteous always. The same description applies to all of them. Oh! If they weren't all so polite to me!

"Father did not speak to us, Annie," she said. "I spoke to him for us all. It was easy to see how you both felt. I always knew that you did. He has suffered a great deal, and we see no reason why he should delay his happiness. He would tell you this evening, but we thought if I came round and brought you home to tea of my own accord it would show him and you that 'the family' quite approve, and that we mean to get on very pleasantly together. We all know that you mean that too."

"Oh, thank you, Maud!"

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I cried. "Thank you! I *do* mean it. How sweet you are!"

She smiled just a little. They all smile in that faint, slow way.

"Why, no!" she said. "That is hardly the word for me; but I'm glad you appreciate our wish to make things comfortable for our——"

She bit her lip and paused.

"Your friend," I said. "You'll always call me Nan, of course, or Annie, if you prefer. Anything else would be absurd."

"Thank you." She inclined her head in her gracious, slow way. "That will ease the situation. You are such a young little thing, Annie. It would seem ridiculous to call you 'mother,' wouldn't it? But we shall fully recognise your position as mistress of father's house. Now get on your hat and come."

I went with her, and they all received me very courteously. George—he was nearly nineteen and a great athlete; a huge fellow, who looked a grown man and behaved like one—placed a chair for me as if I were a grand lady. Elsa—she was seventeen and so lovely—shook hands and spoke as if she were grown up. "We want to welcome you," she told me. "An—I don't quite know what to call you now."

"Nan," I proposed. "Anything else would make me feel uncomfortable. Maud and I have settled that already. I'll be Nan to all of you—I hope to be a friend and comrade."

They all bowed at that, and Stanley—he was fifteen—looked happier, and came and shook hands as if he'd shake mine off. He wasn't quite so stiff as the rest.

"I was afraid——" he began, and then paused. "I'd like to call you Nan," he said, "if you don't think it's cheek! We don't mind much, you know, and——"—he had a good look at me—"I should think it will be awfully jolly for father!"

"Oh, *thank* you, Stanley!" I cried. "That *is* nice of you! I want it to be jolly for all of us. Be my pal, Stan!"

"All right," he agreed, "Nan!"

He flushed, and so did I; and then Maud turned the conversation. They were so very, very nice, but I felt awkward till dear old Frank came in. How pleased he looked to see me, and how surprised!

"We thought we'd like to bring Nan here of our own accord, father," Maud told him—I always envy the calm, ready way in which all of his children speak. Nothing seems to confuse them—"so that you'd both see that we welcome her. Very truly we hope that you will both be exceedingly happy. I am saying that for all of us, and——"—she wavered for just a moment and then looked right up in his face—"and we think there is no one who deserves happiness so much as you do."

He kissed the girls and shook hands with the boys. Then he kissed me before them all. His eyes were wet.

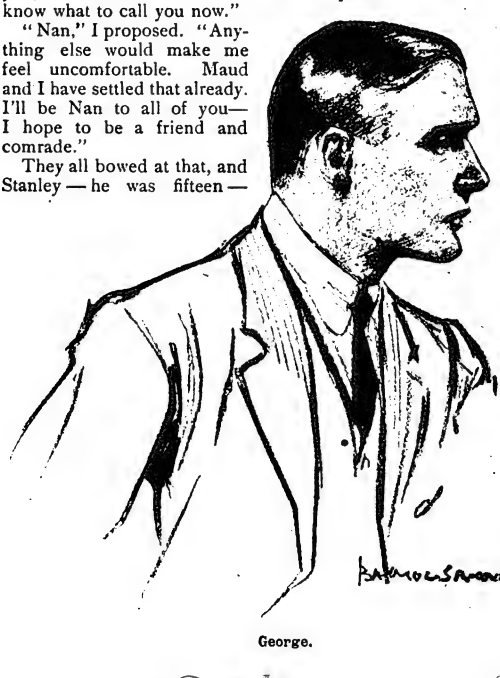
"My dear ones!" he said.

"Please," I begged, "please—mine too! I will try my best!"

"We're sure you will," the three eldest said in their polite way. I liked Stanley's better.

"*You're* all right," he blurted out. "We're going to call her 'Nan,' father."

We were married very soon afterwards. I would like to write of my unspeakable happiness with him, but it only makes it worse that I have failed in what he wanted most of me—to win the love of his children. They have all been very good to me always. They have never done an unkind thing or said an unkind word. I have nothing but praise for all of them. It is not like them to do this dreadful thing to me now, but they



George.

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are always just, and I must deserve it. It is not myself that I think of, but Frank. *How* it will hurt him! And whatever he may say to comfort me, he will know in his own heart that I *have* been a failure.

They never gave me a hint of it. Maud took some of the house management off my hands in the first week, but she did it very kindly, and I did not think it was because she considered me incompetent, but just for the reasons that she stated.

"Don't think I want to usurp any of your authority in the house, Nan," she said. "I would neither do that nor allow anyone else to do it, but, you see, I have rather a turn for household affairs, and you haven't been used to them, and they worry you. It seems a pity that you shouldn't have more time for your stories. They pay better than house-keeping! So you must let me be your deputy."

"How kind of you, Maud!" I cried. "Let me do some, too, because I ought to. We'll make a bargain. I'll go shares with you in the stories I write in the extra time you make for me!"

She shook her head at that.

"Don't you see?" she explained. "I couldn't take reward for doing things in father's house, for father's wife and for father. *You* wouldn't if you were in my place."

Maud.

I couldn't dispute that, but I did buy her things out of my story money, and she seemed to be pleased with them, especially the time when I asked her to come with me to choose a costume, and bought one for her, too, and she insisted on taking me to a *matinée* afterwards, and paying out of her own pocket money. "You're a nice baby to look after," she said, "little Nan!" I thought she loved me in her way. I did love her very much, and I do. The fault must be mine. Maud is a good and noble woman, and so beautiful. I always think she ought to have been a princess.

George, too, has always treated me very, very kindly. If he meets me out he comes with me and carries my parcels. If it rains he holds my umbrella over me. If he sees that I am looking for anything—I do lose things—he helps me find it. He praises whatever I do for him, and when I make him little presents out of my story earnings he puts them in his study or uses them, and what I like best is that he always tells his father anything I have done that will please him. He has been so chivalrous to me. I can't think how he could join in anything to hurt me so dreadfully. I suppose they have all talked it over, and decided that they don't want to live at home with me any more, and this is their way of bringing it about. They are very resolute all of them, and very clever. They know quite well that their father will understand what it means, and that he never blinks the truth, but will "have it out" with them. I don't think they know how it will hurt him. He has such a warm heart, my dear, dear husband!

Elsa I don't understand. I never did, and I never shall. She is the fondest of her father of all of them; passionately fond of him. I think she is a little jealous, and perhaps she resents my speaking to her the other day—I tried to do it very kindly and affectionately—about judging her friends too harshly and quarrelling about trifles with Maud. At least, it would have been quarrelling if Maud would quarrel, but she never does.

Elsa behaved well at the time.

"Thank you, Nan," she said. "I'll think it over, but you haven't a temper, and you don't know what it is to have one and keep it in."

"Do you?" I said. "Then just be a little braver, darling, and you'll grow as sweet as you look, bonny girl!"

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And I put my arm round her and kissed her, and she put flowers in my study afterwards like she does when I give her things. Perhaps they think I only give them things to curry favour, but I just love to spend my story-money on their father and them. Or perhaps they think I keep too much of it for myself; but I was saving up for the motor-car they all want, and meant to surprise them. . . . Oh! I don't want the children to go away. I want to keep them on my own account, as well as for Frank's sake. If they don't like me, I like them!

Stanley does like me. I know he does. They have persuaded him that he must stand in with them, but I am sure that he must have made some excuses for me when they discussed it. He tells me all about things at school, and I always go to see him play football, and he never fails to come and talk to me, and insists on leaving his friends to escort me home. I try to help him with his lessons. I can help with the essays anyhow. And on my birthday—they all gave me presents then—he said: "Good old Nan!" And I said: "I've a good mind to kiss you, Stan!" I said it just to tease him, because he hates being "slobbered by girls," as he calls it; but he said: "All right!" And I did.

Stanley.

He told me that I looked a "ripper" in my new hat, and I persuaded Frank to let him learn to drive a motor; and I hired one to let him take me for a drive, and paid for the milk-cart he ran into, and didn't tell anyone because he said they'd laugh at him; and when he was so bad with influenza he kept saying that he wanted Nan to come and talk to him. Oh, Stan! Oh, all of you! Don't you see that it isn't only going to hurt me. It's going to hurt your father! Isn't there *any* way of stopping that?

They are very just. I shall go and speak to them. Perhaps I will show them this story.

I cannot explain things so well as I write them, but I will ask them to think how it will hurt their father, and tell them how I will do all the housekeeping if they give me another chance.

They have refused to read the story unless I finish it. So now I am writing the end. God bless them!

I went downstairs and found them all sitting in the breakfast-room. They do things together more than most brothers and sisters do. I suppose it threw them together having no mother at home. Maud was writing a letter, and George was studying some bones that he keeps in a box—he is going to be a doctor. Elsa was drawing—she is very clever at that—and Stanley was playing with the cat instead of doing his lessons.

They all looked up when I went in. George put a chair for me, and Maud said: "You've inked your fingers, Nan!" Elsa laughed and cried: "Again!" Stan said: "I've got some fine stuff to take it off."

They all seemed to smile at me, just as if they liked me, and I began to cry.

"Why, Nan!" Maud said. "Aren't you well?"

She sounded quite concerned.

"Sit down and tell us about it," George suggested, and he seemed to say it *so* kindly.

Elsa cried, "Poor old Nan!" and Stanley asked, "What's up, pal?"

I gave one dreadful sob at that. Then I rubbed and rubbed the tears away and gulped till I got my voice.

"I have something to say to you," I told them, speaking as quickly as I could. "It is very hard to say, but it matters very much to us all, and to your father. Will you please, *please* hear me right to the end before you say anything? *Please* promise!"

They all stared at me.

"Of course, if you wish, Nan," Maud promised.

"Of course," George agreed; "but you *must* sit down. I can see you aren't well."

I sat back on the chair he had put for me. Elsa brought me a footstool, and Stan came and fidgeted round me.

"I went into Maud's room," I said, "to borrow a hairpin. I know I lose my things, and am not a good housekeeper. You needn't tell me that. I saw your wedding-present in there . . . for your father

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. . . That was obvious without the card."

"Why, Nan——" Maud began.

"Don't stop me!" I begged. "Don't! I don't want to talk about my own hurt. I did think you loved me a little. I know I don't manage things well, but I loved all of you, and I do. I——"

"You don't think——" Elsa began, but George stopped her.

"Let Nan finish," he insisted. "It's best to have things right out sometimes."

I think he will make a grand doctor. He has just the right way with people.

Elsa.

"It is your father I think of," I went on. "He will be so terribly, terribly hurt that you don't like me. . . . You didn't warn me that you didn't. Won't you be fair and give me a chance to manage the house better, and—and do things?"

"Why, Nan, you——" Elsa began, but George stopped her again.

"Let Nan have her say out," he commanded. "We'll have ours afterwards."

"Yes," I said. "I know you'll be able to say things better than I can. I'm very stupid at everything except writing. If you thought I was greedy in keeping so much of my story-money for myself, it was only to buy a car for all of you."

Maud made a sound like a groan, and Stanley put his hand on my shoulder. His eyes were blinking fast.

"I don't know how to say it," I told them, "but I thought—if you'd go on pretending to like me, just to please your father, and—and—let me buy a wedding present for myself and pretend it was from you. I—I——" I got out my silver purse, and let some gold drop out on the floor.

Maud came then and picked me up in her great arms and sat down with me on her knees, and put my head on her shoulder and actually kissed me.

"Baby Nan," she said, "I think you are the silliest little creature I ever met! And I know you are the nicest! You just sit still for a minute and don't say a word, and compose your little self. Then we'll talk to you. . . . Go and get it, George."

"I'll go too," Elsa offered. I could hear that she was crying.

George and Elsa went out. I heard them run upstairs. I buried my head on Maud's shoulder, and she and I didn't speak, but Stanley did. "Old pal!" he whispered in my ear. "Here's a handkerchief." He quickly pushed one into my hand.

When George and Elsa came back I sat up and tried to laugh, and suddenly I noticed what George and Elsa were putting on the table—a lovely silver tray and a silver trinket set on it!

"We thought," George explained, "that we'd like to give you a separate present to show you that we didn't do it only on account of father. . . Even if he were gone—God spare him for years and years—you'd still be one of us, Nan."

"The best of us," Elsa declared, with her lovely face against mine.

"The silliest!" Maud reproached me, but she stroked my hair.

"Don't tease her!" said Stanley protectingly.

"Your qualifications are on the card," George told me; and then I read it.

With the Children's Love
To Nan,
Their dear little mother.

"It seems to me," Maud said, "we're more like four mothers to *you*, Baby Nan!"

"That shows I would have been a failure!" I said, "if your love hadn't saved me from it, my dear ones!"

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Entertaining "Tommy."

By
H. C. Mole.

To people anxious to entertain wounded soldiers worthily, either at home or in hospital, the following article will come as a boon. The author, who has had a wide experience of such entertaining, gives many new and admirable suggestions for games and competitions, all of which have stood the test of actual experience.

A story has been going the rounds of a kind-hearted lady who was entertaining wounded soldiers. Turning to one man the lady asked him where his friend was.

"Well, mum," was the reply, "we couldn't both get away, so we tossed for it."

"And I suppose you won?" said the hostess.

"No mum, I lost."

This may be a little overdrawn, but if you have had opportunities of seeing "Tommy" in camp and hospital, you will know something of what he has to put up with at times.

When you hear the songs that are sometimes chosen, and the tactless and curious questions occasionally asked, you instinctively realise that the men feel there are other things that irritate more than wounds. That is why a few practical suggestions for entertaining soldiers—all items which have borne the test of practical experience—may not come amiss to those who want to vary the usual conventional programme.

THE AWKWARD SQUAD.

This is really a reading competition, and can be safely depended on for a lot of genuine fun.

Ask six men to go in for it, and explain that the only difficulty is that there are no stops in the extract they have to read, so that the more stops they put in the wrong places the more fun for the rest of the men. Offer two packets of cigarettes as prizes, one for the man who makes fewest mistakes, and the other for the man who causes the most fun, the audience to decide the winners.

The six competitors are sent outside the room, and instructed to come in one at a time when summoned. After the door is safely closed, read the paper to the men who are present, in order that they will know how it should be read, as this adds to the fun later.

This is the extract to be read:

Men eat.
With your ears you can hear.
Birds fly.
To ride, get a donkey.
For sickness, take medicine.
In buckets they wash.
At the co-operative stores they sell black-lead.
To wash your faces use Pear's soap.
In pounds they buy sugar.
Before breakfast, walk.
To the moon there is no road.
By the yard you can buy cord.
To hang yourself would be sad.
Along the promenade he escorted a young lady.
Upon his back he carried a parcel.

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But the way the men get it is something like this:

Men eat with your ears you can hear birds fly to ride get a donkey for sickness take medicine in buckets they wash at the co-operative stores they sell black-lead to wash your faces use Pear's soap in pounds they buy sugar before breakfast walk to the moon there is no road by the yard you buy cord to hang yourself would be sad along the promenade he escorted a young lady upon his back he carried a parcel.

Then in come the men, one at a time, and the fun grows fast and furious. No. 1 evidently eats with his ears, whilst perhaps No. 2 takes medicine in buckets, nearly all wash their faces with black-lead, and walk to the moon before breakfast. No. 5 escorts a young lady on his back, while No. 6 is a mental case who is anxious to buy cord to hang himself along the promenade.

When all have finished, take the votes, and distribute your little prizes.

THE MUSICAL STORY.

Quite as effective as "The Reading Competition" is "The Musical Story," although the humour is not so boisterous in character. This is really a modification of an old round game, and all that is required by the artiste is some little knowledge of the piano and a good supply of pencils and papers for distribution. Two or three little prizes should also be provided.

Give out the papers and pencils and let the competitors work in couples, a bed-case and sitting-up case together, if you are in a hospital ward.

Simply stating that you are going to tell them a little tale, you sit down at the piano and say that when there is a break in the story the few chords you play will provide the clue. Any man who wishes you to repeat the chords must call out "Encore," and they will be played a second time.

Now for the tale!

I once knew a fellow, such a decent sort of chap. Let me see what was his name (plays three chords of "Robin Adair"). And such a nice girl he had ("Clementine"). They had known each other for years and met ("Comin' through the Rye"). So they got married and the best man was ("Poor Old Joe"). The bridesmaid's name was ("Mary"). And the nicest part of her costume was ("Golden Slippers"). She had a beautiful dress and the colour was ("Wearing of the Green"). The first thing she saw in the vestry was ("Three Blind Mice"). What a wedding breakfast they had! The nicest part was ("S'nice S'mince Pie"). They had plenty of ale, but the wine list was "Absent"). For their honeymoon they went ("Marching Through Georgia"). And of their presents the one they liked the best was ("Grandfather's Clock"). The kiddies all shouted after him ("Hello! Who's Your Lady Friend"). And when they got home someone said to him ("Come on, Tommy, Come on, Jack"). So he said to his wife ("Keep the Home Fires Burning"). I'll soon be back when we have ("Wound up the Watch on the Rhine"). And every night in camp he said to himself ("A Day's March Nearer Home"). He had a great friend in the same platoon ("Private Michael Cassidy"). And both talked every night about ("The Old Folks At Home"). When his wife wrote to him she said ("Somebody Knows, Somebody Cares"). And she told all her friends that ("Somebody's Boy is Out at the Front"). And he wrote home to say that he hoped ("Irish Eyes Are Smiling"). And that he always remembered the ("Sunshine of Your Smile"). In her last letter the wife said ("When You Come Home, Dear"). Then he and his friend got leave. When they were on the boat a storm rose so he said ("Joe, Joe, the Boat is Going Over"). One man got washed overboard ("John Brown"). At the end of the railway journey it was four miles to the village, so he had to "Wait for the Waggon"). At length he knocked at the door. His wife came, and his first words were ("Here we are, here we are again!"). At supper they drank each other's health from ("Little Brown Jug"). And as it was Sunday, they went for an hour to ("Maggie Murphy's Home").

When the lists are ready, get them to change with each other for the purpose of checking and read out the correct titles. Remember not to play *too* much of the air. It is quite a usual thing to get a list with twenty-eight right out of thirty.

Do not limit your *repertoire* to the above list. The scope is unlimited, and, with a little ingenuity, the most unlikely "titles" can be brought in. Medleys sold for the piano, like "Darkyland," will provide you with quite a number of suitable airs.

A SOLDIERS' DAY.

The following is the routine of an ordinary day as expressed in the titles of well-known hymns. This always arouses mirth when read out; or, if liked, the soldiers can be invited to compile their own lists of suitable hymns, and a prize be awarded for the most appropriate.

5.30 a.m.—Reveille:	"Christians, awake."
7.45 a.m.—Roll Call:	"Art Thou Weary, Art Thou Languid?"
8.0 a.m.—Breakfast:	"Meekly wait and murmur not."
9.0 a.m.—Manœuvres:	"Fight the good fight."
11.15 a.m.—Swedish Drill:	"Here we suffer grief and pain."
1.0 p.m.—Dinner:	"Come, ye thankful people, come."
2.15 p.m.—Lectures by Officer:	"Tell me the old, old story."
4.30 p.m.—Dismiss:	"Praise God from Whom all blessings flow."
5.30 p.m.—Tea:	"What means this eager, anxious throng?"
6.30 p.m.—Out of Bounds:	"Oh, how happy we shall be!"

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A reel of sewing cotton placed in an inside coat pocket and then threaded through to the outside, with about two inches left hanging, causes much fun when an unsuspecting person tries to remove it.

10.0 p.m.—Last Post: "All are safely gathered in."
10.15 p.m.—Lights Out: "Peace, perfect peace."
2.30 p.m.—Friday, Pay Day: "Count your blessings one by one."

The most simple diversions are often the most popular with the men, and all kinds of amusements can be arranged with a little forethought and enterprise. They will thoroughly enjoy being blindfolded and trying to pin the tail on a large paper donkey, or guessing the height of a top-hat, for the moment put out of sight. Or set them to draw a simple pattern, such as a Union Jack, with hands covered and eyes fixed on a small looking-glass where the copy is to be seen.

A Memory Competition is another favourite amusement.

Place on a tray a lot of little articles—a penny, button, lump of sugar, inkpot, cup, and so on. Let it be carried round or placed where all can see it for a full minute and then covered over, while the men vie with each other in compiling the most accurate list of objects.

Service in the army must increase the power of observation, and you will often get an absolutely correct list even when the articles number thirty or more.

A reel of white cotton placed in an inside coat pocket and then threaded through to the outside, with about two inches left hanging, causes much fun. Many people will help to remove it, and your coat is momentarily expected to fall to pieces as the inches of cotton grow into yards.

A singing competition, in which parties of four compete, representing various regiments, or wards of the hospital, is sure to take. Some popular piece, such as "Keep the Home Fires Burning," should be chosen as the test, and a capable adjudicator pressed into service.

An amusing half-hour can be spent with the aid of an old black felt hat on a small table. A pin is pressed well into the top of the hat, and volunteers are invited to get it out with their teeth while their hands are tied behind their backs.

While the competitors are out of the room you scatter a little soot over the hat from a pepper-pot. The soot is, of course, quite invisible. The men come in one at a time, and in their efforts to get out the pin their faces get most quaintly decorated. This, however, is more suitable for camp than hospital; at any rate, those men with face wounds should not be allowed to compete.

Here is a little ditty that can be turned to capital account for the entertainment of the men. The tune is of very little consequence.

Old McDuffy had a little farm,
E. I. E. I. O.,
And on this farm he kept some ducks,
E. I. E. I. O.
With a quack quack here
And a quack quack there,
Here a quack and there a quack,
A-quacking everywhere
On old McDuffy's farm.

A few volunteers are wanted, and each man represents an animal—sheep, pig, duck, and so on. The first man sings his verse as given above, and as soon as he has finished the second starts his, substituting "sheep"

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for "duck" and "baa-baa" for "quack," but without any pause. The first man comes in at the end with the last five lines of his verse, then the third takes it up, and so it goes on, getting funnier and funnier, until you have been right through your farmyard.

Useful as these extra items are, you must, of course, reserve a good proportion of your programme for music in one form and another. As far as instrumental music is concerned, the banjo and concertina seem to take first place in the soldiers' affections. The violin, too, is always popular with them, provided the choice falls on a medley of well-known airs.

In some of the hospitals, too, you will meet men quite clever with the Jew's harp, and it is wonderful how much music can be extracted from this humble little instrument.

As regards vocal music, very often the songs selected are suitable for neither singer nor audience. Too often, alas! they are songs without choruses. Whether in "Blighty" or "Somewhere in France," it is the old folk songs, the simple ditties with a chorus, that get right there. The songs that speak of "love" and the "Old Folks at Home" are always popular. "The Old Kit Bag," "The Long, Long Trail," "Sally in Our Alley," or how "Drake Went West" make a never-failing appeal. Their lives in the months that have passed have held many a good-bye, so for pity's sake refrain from letting them know how Tosti said it.

"Tommy" always welcomes a funny story such as that of the minister who asked Mrs. Gubbins if her son had been wounded in the campaign; whereat the good lady replied that this might be so, for she knew it *was* somewhere about the "stummick."

SOLDIERS' TALES.

As a change from games and music you may decide to relate amusing stories for the benefit of your audience, and for this purpose some of the following tales—many of them culled from the "Tommies" themselves—may be found useful.

Whether they describe you on the programme as a "raconteur," "light comedian," or "elocutionist," you will find that it enhances a series of, say, twelve tales, if you can arrange them in some little sequence, around some central figures. For the

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The "blue-boys" will appreciate the story of the Hun officer who, when he wished to surrender, was sent back for his helmet by a "Tommy" who was desirous of displaying the treasure to admiring audiences during his leave—due the next week.

purposes of this article what could be more appropriate than "Soldier's Tales?"

MINISTER: "They tell me, Mrs. Gubbins, that your heroic son was wounded in the campaign?"

MRS. GUBBINS: "Maybe, sir! It was somewhere about the stummick, I know."

❦ ❦

PRIVATE BINKS (on duty for the last time before going home on leave): "Halt, who comes there?"

"I'm a Prussian officer come to surrender."

"Well, you go back and fetch your helmet; I'm going on leave next week."

❦ ❦

NERVOUS SUB: "Gentlemen, I have to propose our Colonel's health—and—er—I would like to embrace the Colonel's wife."

❦ ❦

OFFICER: "Seen anything of my baggage, Sentry?"

SENTRY: "She's waiting round the corner, sir."

❦ ❦

MEDICAL OFFICER: "What's the matter with this man?"

ORDERLY: "Had an accident and swallowed half-a-sovereign."

MEDICAL OFFICER: "Well, how is he?"

ORDERLY: "No change, sir."

"Our Major, 'e's an officer and a gentleman," said a certain "Tommy" to some interested pals.

"The other day he comes into the canteen, and says 'Any complaints?'

"And I says, 'Yes, sir, beg pardon, sir, this tea ain't fit to drink.'

"So he says to the bloke who served us: 'Give us a cup,' and when he'd tasted it: ''Ogwash,' says he. Then he says to the bloke:

"'Line those men up and give them their tuppences,' and I'd never paid mine."

❦ ❦

The scene was a front line trench, where a party of four were playing "Nap."

After a while one went "double nap," but a stray bullet came and put an end to him.

One of his companions reverently lifted the poor fellow's hand, and looked at the cards.

"Crool!" he said. "'E'd a got it, too."

❦ ❦

The men had come out of the trenches one bitterly cold night, and were billeted in a barn packed like sardines. Though numbed with cold they were soon asleep. Later on one was wakened by a neighbour trying to get his boots on.

"What the blazes are you doing?" he inquired testily.

"Putting my boots on," was the reply.

"Well, that's my foot, you fool."

But the best of these entertainments comes to an end, and sometimes the speeches are the tit-bits of the evening.

"Brother comrades," began the N.C.O. chosen by the Matron, "I'm sure you'll all join with me in thanking the ladies and gentlemen who 'ave so kindly given us this 'ere grand concert. Of course, we've not spent our Christmas in the way we should have liked, and we all 'ope we shan't be in this company next year, but with those we love, and——"

Thank Heaven for a pianist who knows when to strike up the National Anthem!

(These enlivening tricks and stories are only a few of the good things contained in a book by the same author, entitled "How to Entertain in Camp and Hospital." The book costs only a shilling, and the whole of the author's profits will go to the Red Cross Fund. Ask your bookseller for it, or send 1s. 3d. to the Publisher, 18 Henrietta Street, Covent Garden, W.C.)

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THE MAN WHO FEARED DARKNESS

By W. A. Williamson.

"Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
And having once turned round walks on,
And turns no more his head,
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread."

Brandenwell is the night-watchman at Gorrington and Cowls, the big Regent Street jewellers. He is a man of considerable education and a most interesting personality, so I, who was curious to know something of a night-watchman's work, had arranged to share his vigil for one night.

My curiosity cost me one of the most uncomfortable nights I have ever experienced, a goodly amount of tobacco and beer, and, afterwards, a swift, nerve-tearing bout of influenza. But it gained me a great story.

Starting at nine o'clock, I accompanied Brandenwell on a long series of rounds of inspection, and always everything was well. No masked men sprang into view from behind show-cases, and my ears, strained to catch the chirping of a brace and bit or the sizzle of a blow-pipe, were always disappointed. By midnight I was very cold, very drowsy, and very cross.

At four o'clock Brandenwell announced that all self-respecting cracksmen would be on their way home to bed, and suggested that we should go up on to the roof to watch the breaking of dawn. He said a London daybreak was worth watching, and although I was in no mood to enjoy sunrise I swallowed a cup of Brandenwell's coffee, hugged my ulster around my shivering body and followed him to the roof-top.

"This is the part of the night I don't care about," observed Brandenwell confidentially, as we settled ourselves on a long packing-case that lay against the parapet—"the hour before dawn."

I lit a cigar with fingers that trembled so much that I wasted countless matches, and agreed with him silently but very heartily.

"I can see this kind of thing don't appeal to you," said Brandenwell. "It don't to me much. Yet there are men who wouldn't do anything else. Mostly there's a reason, of course. Corrigan, he had a reason. A mighty good reason."

I inquired casually after Corrigan and wasted three more matches on my obstinate cigar. Brandenwell carried on with the good work of coaxing half-an-ounce of my tobacco into his capacious pipe before replying.

"Corrigan was night-watchman with me at Howlett's, the diamond merchant in Hatton Garden," he said presently. "That was a couple of years ago, when a cute gang was working London, and Howlett thought it needed two men on the job. So he engaged Corrigan, who was an old soldier like me.

"'He's a fine figure of a man, and his character is A 1 excellent,' said old Howlett to me—no side about Jimmy Howlett. 'The only thing is he seems a bit nervy. He cried when he was seeing me about the job. Said

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he must have night-work, and wouldn't go where there wasn't two watchmen. He's been to India; p'raps that's worn him down a bit.'

"Corrigan was sure enough a fine-made man. He gave me a couple of inches and he had a chest like a gorilla. But he was tame and friendly with not a spark of devil in him. He said he'd do anything to keep the job. I took to him.

"First night we started duty together I suggested we should do rounds in turn, and I got the surprise of my life when that big man, who could have sailed through half-a-dozen people without using up half his strength, took hold of my hands and begged me not to talk like that.

"'We must go round together,' he said. 'Always together! So long as it's night time I can't bear to be alone!' He was stuttering this out like a blessed kid, and it sickened me.

"'Buck up!' I told him. 'I didn't expect any such nonsense from you. Aren't you a soldier?'

"'I know you'll find it hard to understand,' says Corrigan. 'But when it's dark I forget to be a man. I can't sleep at nights, only in the day-time, and that's why I came after this job. For heaven's sake, Brandenwell, don't get me out of it.'

"Looking at him more closely I could see that Corrigan had heavy watery eyes, and his mouth was trembling. I felt sorry for him.

"'You stay on this job,' I said to him, 'and we'll make the rounds together.' I gave him my hand, but there was no bite in his grip, just flabbiness.

"Nothing more was said just then, but Corrigan bucked up wonderfully. We moved round together, finding everything O.K. all the while. The only thing I noticed was that he seemed straining to keep himself in hand.

"About this hour of the morning, just a bit before dawn, I started to make a cup of coffee. I had a room with a scullery adjoining at the top of the house, and there was a gas-ring over which I did the cooking. I left Corrigan smoking in the room whilst I went into the scullery—the door wide-open all the time, mind you!—and I'd hardly got the water on when something happened.

"First I heard Corrigan breathing very hard, a regular wheeze, so I shouted out to him to come into the scullery with me. He never answered me, but the wheezing stopped. I went on with my work.

"Another minute and there came such a ghastly yell that I dropped the coffee-pot and cut through the door expecting to find —I don't know quite what horror I expected. But what I saw was bad enough anyway. Corrigan was on the floor grovelling. A man, a man you could have envied for his physique, sprawling on the dirty boards with his forehead touching the floor. Ugh!

"My anger got out of all control then. I rushed over to Corrigan, heaved him up off the floor, and planked him into a chair with a force that must have jarred his craven heart. He was foaming slightly at the mouth and his eyes were horrible.

"'Corrigan!' I shouted. 'Corrigan!' And his lips began to move, mouthing some words I could not understand; they were not English. Then he gave a sudden start, and rolled sideways in the chair, shivering from head to foot.

"The whole business was more than uncanny, and I began to feel the effects of it myself. Luckily it was getting lighter all the time, and the light seemed to act like a tonic on Corrigan. His shivering ceased, and he began to straighten up in the chair. When he looked at me he actually smiled.

"'Better?' I asked. 'What on earth made you go off like that?'

"'Something you don't understand!' said Corrigan, and that was the first time I had seen him show any sort of spirit. He was a different man altogether now that daylight had come. When I tried to question him he put me off and as good as told me to mind my own business.

"But that evening he was all nerves again, afraid to say half of anything and as crawly as a cur. He wouldn't let me out of his sight for a minute, and when it got near dawn again I saw that he was in for another of his attacks.

"This time I was with him when it started. We were sitting together chatting when he suddenly broke off in the middle of a sentence and stared at something over my shoulder. I looked round with a jerk, for Corrigan's face was ghastly with fear, and yet there was nothing visible to me. Corrigan could see—Something. His eyes told me that.

"Then, before I could stop him, he flung himself on the floor and commenced to grovel. It took every ounce of my strength to get him up again, and even then he fought like a maniac to throw himself on the ground, muttering all the while in some foreign tongue.

"So he kept on for a good twenty minutes until the first streak of daylight brought relief. Then all his self-control returned, and he started to get uppish because I wanted to know things.

"Seven o'clock that evening Corrigan

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came in looking a little worse than awful. He collapsed right away, and when I got him upstairs it took a stiff dose of brandy before he could speak.

"'It's all up with me,' he says. '*He's* taken to coming to me in the daytime now. He followed me through the streets to-night. He will be here soon to claim me!'

"'I hope he will, whoever he is,' I said. 'I'd like a few words with the gentleman.'

"Up till midnight Corrigan made the rounds with me, although he was so shaky I pretty well had to carry him along. Then he suddenly fell asleep in his chair, leaving me to carry on alone. I didn't mind much because I was glad to be rid of him.

"Must have been about two when things began to happen. I had just been upstairs to take a peep at Corrigan, who was still asleep, and was coming down to the office again when I heard a shuffle the other side of the passage door. I crept along a bit, listening carefully. Somebody was there sure enough. I felt for the revolver Jimmy Howlett had handed to me a few days before when the first big jewel robbery occurred, and took a good grip on the butt——"

Brandenwell's face, clean-cut and strong, showed up in a yellow flare for a second as he stopped to re-light his pipe. I could see that his eyes were twinkling.

"They caught me napping," he continued presently. "And me an old soldier. They had cut their way through the shutters of a window in a little side alley, and I, deaf as an old owl all the time, never heard them. Funny thing when you're sandbagged you wake up and feel that a little slice has been cut out of your life, leaving a gap. That's how I felt when I woke up about an hour later, my head aching, my arms and legs bound, and a gag in my mouth.

"I opened my eyes and saw that I was lying in a corner of Howlett's office. There was a dim light burning, and I could see two black figures kneeling on the floor by the door of the strong-room. Twenty thousand pound's worth of gems in that safe, too.

"The men were talking together very quietly, and from what I gathered they seemed to be having trouble with the oxy-acetylene blowpipe they had brought along. All the while I was wriggling with my ropes, but the knots wouldn't budge an inch.

"Soon there came a hissing sound, and a sudden flash of light jumped across the ceiling. They were working the blowpipe inside a black cover, and that was the only light I saw. But I could hear the metal sizzling away all right, and my feelings as I listened were pretty rotten. I cursed Corrigan for going to sleep.

"'Nearly through,' said one of the men after a while, and I set my teeth into the gag until I nearly choked. If only I could shift it I was ready to yell blue murder. But it seemed hopeless, and I was in despair when——

"'Hands up!' said a voice from the doorway, such a soothing, gentle, purring kind of voice that it didn't startle me, for all its unexpectedness. I looked up quickly, and there at the other side of the room was an Indian native. He stood motionless in the doorway, a tall, handsome figure in evening dress, with a white turban coiled round his head and a little silver-plated revolver gleaming in his right hand.

"I never saw anyone more surprised than those two crooks by the safe when they turned round and saw who had pulled them up. They were just paralysed; the shock seemed to take all thought of fight out of them.

"'Now,' said the Indian—and I tell you his voice was real music—'you on the left there keep your hands well up, and you'—this was to the second man—'pick up that rope and tie his arms and legs. I don't intend to hurt you, and I have nothing to do with the police. I have come here on a little private enterprise of my own, and you are in my way. At once!'

"The way he gave that order would have made most men obey him. There was a coil of fine rope lying on the floor, and with it the second crook started to tie up his companion as though he meant it. It was really weird to watch him. He must have taken the Indian chap for a ghost.

"When the first man was tied, the other crook just laid himself down on the floor—and this with only a signal from the Indian. I couldn't get a perfect view from where I lay, but I had seen enough to make me sweat in streams. And yet this was only the beginning.

"The Indian tied up the second man himself, and then he put away the revolver and stood in the centre of the room, his eyes turned to the ceiling. Not a muscle moved; he seemed in a kind of trance.

"I began to think that I was dreaming, it was all so unreal, until suddenly I heard the shuffling of unsteady feet in the outer office and Corrigan came stumbling through the doorway. His face was ghastly and he seemed half dead with fright. A yard before the Indian he halted and waited, his whole body trembling.

"'So you heard my call?' said the Indian in his soft purr. 'I have found you again, you see. Do you know what night this is?'

"'It is September the twenty-fourth,' said

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The Indian . . . stood in the centre of the room, his eyes turned to the ceiling.

Corrigan, just like a school-child repeating a lesson.

"'The twenty-fourth,' said the Indian, and he moved his hand to his left temple, shifting back his turban a couple of inches. I had a good view of his face from where I lay, and could just discern the outline of a white scar running sideways across his forehead.

"'That is your handiwork, you dog,' said the Indian. 'Do you remember that night in Delhi when you struck me down—you and your drunken companions? I could have killed you for it, but my revenge has been

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keener. Has one night passed since then when you have forgotten your bestial act? A year ago this very night, an hour before dawn. Do you remember?'

"'I can't forget,' croaked Corrigan. 'Heaven help me, I can't forget.'

"'Soon you shall forget,' replied the Indian, and all the purr had gone from his voice. 'For two months I have been in your accursed country, and at first the people were kind. In me they recognised a seer from a strange land, and until your pigs of police interfered, all Society fawned upon me. But when I first saw you in the streets some days ago I remembered that I had a vengeance to fulfil on a certain date. Always have I kept track of your movements, and to-night, *the* night, I took care that you should see me. I followed you here, my pathway prepared by these'—he indicated the trussed thieves on the floor—'these tools of destiny. Since first you looked into my eyes, that day of our second meeting in Delhi, I have held you in my thrall. Now I'm grown weary of the strain.'

"All this while I was straining like a madman to get rid of the ropes that held me. Neither of the men had seen me, and I was aching to get my hands on the Indian. So he was the man who had been hounding down poor Corrigan! If I could have got free at that moment he would have paid pretty heavily for it all. The two jewel thieves were taking in the scene with wide-open eyes. They couldn't make head or tail of things.

"Now Corrigan was mumbling something about mercy, but the Indian cut him short with a wave of his hand.

"'Down, you cur!' he cried. 'Down before your master.'

"That was more than I could listen to. The only master a soldier should acknowledge is the superior officer who is giving him orders, and I meant to let Corrigan know it. I just had to get that gag out of my mouth. And out it came.

"'Corrigan!' I yelled. 'Corrigan! *'Shun!*'

"There's more in Army discipline, sir, than you or any other civilian can ever hope to realise. Corrigan had only lately taken his discharge, and he would have answered that familiar order anywhere, no matter who

"I began to think that I was dreaming, it was all so unreal, until suddenly . . . Corrigan came stumbling through the doorway. . . . 'So you heard my call?' said the Indian in his soft purr." [*Page 281, col. 2.*]

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was trying to hold him down. And he answered it then—answered in spite of the Indian and his rotten hypnotism—like a soldier.

"'Down!' purred the Indian. Corrigan was holding himself straight up, his back like a poker. 'Down, you dog!'

"'Hit him, Corrigan!' I shouted. 'Give him all you owe him and a bit extra for me! *And jump to it or you'll find yourself in the guardroom, you miserable coward!*'

"I was talking in the language that Corrigan understood, and I tell you it was a magnificent sight to see the man who had been cringing and trembling like a whipped cur, lash out at his self-styled master with a force that sent him flying.

"And then up sprang the two crooks, who had been wriggling out of their ropes all this time. One of them had a nasty life-preserver in his hand, too. . . .

"I don't know how you take a good scrap, sir; it's the salt of life to me. Corrigan, he had hold of the Indian's throat when the man with the life-preserver jumped up at him. And Corrigan—in his younger days he must have been the hardest hitter in his battalion—was more than his old self again.

"Whilst I watched he just shifted his grip on the Indian, heaving up against the crook with the preserver as though he was handling a bag of flour. The man just dropped right there with all the fight knocked out of him, and a couple of seconds later old Corrigan, still using the Indian as a weapon, had laid the other crook beside him.

"When a party of policemen, thinking that all Hades had been let loose in Hatton Garden, came upon the scene, Corrigan was the only happy man in the room—no joy for me, sir, to be out of a scrap like that!—and they had to handcuff him and tie his legs before he would stop fighting."

Brandenwell paused to wipe the perspiration from his streaming brow. He had been illustrating the fight to me in his own vivid way, and the exertion told.

"They took three men to the hospital and one to the police-station. Corrigan wouldn't calm down in anything but a prison cell," said Brandenwell, laughing at the recollection. "Oh, it was a great night. The Indian was laid up for three weeks, and afterwards he scuttled back to his own country. But ever since then I've hated this creepy hour of the night before dawn.

"The meaning of it all? Hypnotism I put it down to, sir. Corrigan had fallen foul of that native in Delhi, knocked him down with a beer bottle, and the man was taking it out of him in the nasty native way. The thieves were a couple out of that badly wanted gang, and when the rest of them were rounded up a week or so later Corrigan and I shared in a nice little reward.

"Corrigan never worried about the Indian again. The man's hold over him ceased from that night. And all, you see, because Corrigan remembered at the right time that he was a soldier."

Brandenwell blew noisily through his pipe. Pride of all things military is in that man's blood.

"What's become of Corrigan?" I asked.

"He went under at Loos, sir. Joined up at the beginning, and got the V.C. at Mons. He died fighting, a big German in his arms as a weapon, and knocking the Huns over like ninepins—that same little trick again you see. . . . But there's your dawn, sir—a sight for the gods."

Brandenwell shook me by the arm to rouse me, for I was still dreaming of Corrigan.

"Don't reckon *he* regretted it much," said Brandenwell. "He died as he wished to die, like a soldier."

"SEND US THE 'ROYAL'!"

"I need not tell you how fond of the ROYAL we are out here, and we certainly do revel in your theatrical features."

This is only one of the many appreciative comments of the fighting men who look to the ROYAL to cheer up their dull moments, and to you to see that they get it.

Your part is so simple. Just hand as many copies of the ROYAL as you can collect over the counter at any post-office. They must be clean and in good condition, but without wrapping of any kind. They cannot be sent to any particular soldier or sailor, but will be distributed among the troops to the very best advantage.

"Tommy's" leisure is often of the spasmodic order, and that's why short stories and brief, breezy articles are the very thing for him. He will fight twice as well if he is in good spirits, so—well, it's up to you, isn't it?

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For "Soldiers and Sailors Too"

All the contributions on this page were sent in by officers and men serving in H.M. Forces. A pack of ROYAL playing-cards or a silver pencil-case is given for every accepted storyette, joke, bit of verse, or drawing sent in by a sailor or soldier. Please say which gift you prefer, and address envelopes to The O.C., ROYAL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

HIS ONLY FRIEND.

The following conversation between a Maori soldier and a Sister was heard in a military hospital:

SYMPATHETIC SISTER: "Have you any friends in England?"

MAORI (greatly amused at the idea of a Maori having friends so far from New Zealand): "No—oh, yes, Sister, one."

SYMPATHETIC SISTER: "Who is that, then?"

MAORI: "My pay book."

A PAT REPLY.

A certain battalion had just moved from Dublin to Mullingar, and during the first day there two men were late coming on parade, whereupon the Sergeant-Major shouted to them in his foghorn voice:

"Now then, double up, there!"

This had little effect on the men, whereat the Sergeant-Major said to them:

"D'yer call this doub-l'n'?" (Dublin.)

"No, sir," replied one of the men quickly "Mullingar."

INVOLVED!

A British "Tommy" writing to his parents from "Somewhere in France," gives the following rather puzzling description:

"You wish to know where we are? We are not allowed to say where we are, but I may venture to say that we are not where we were, but where we were before we left here to go to where we have just come from."

How Others Look in Full Marching Kit, and How We Feel Ourselves.

SLEEPING SOFT.

It was at a very thickly populated camp during the early days of the war. The occasion was the first parade of the day at 5.30 a.m., when Private Rawbones stepped out of the front rank and addressing the N.C.O. in charge, said:

"Can I have a fresh sleeping place, please, Sergeant?"

SERGEANT: "Why? How long have you been here?"

RAWBONES: "Nearly a week, Sergeant."

SERGEANT: "And where are you sleeping?"

RAWBONES: "Well, up to the present I've been sleeping on a sick man, Sergeant, but he's getting better now."

"SOME" JOB!

When a certain Australian contingent arrived in Egypt, it was noticed that the discipline of the troops was rather slack. One day an Anzac passed an officer without saluting. The officer called him back.

"Do you know who I am?" he asked.

The Australian replied that he did not.

"Well, I am an officer."

"Oh, are you?" was the reply. "Well, you've got a soft job, mate. You stick to it."

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CAP AND BELLS

OPPOSING FORCES.

One afternoon a man was rambling along the street when he saw a drayman with a huge packing-case that he was experiencing great difficulty in getting through a doorway. Having a good heart, the pedestrian lent a helping hand.

"We can't budge it," remarked the drayman, after five minutes of the hardest kind of work, as he paused to mop his perspiring brow. "Biggest job I've tackled in many a long day."

"It is too heavy for us," admitted the kind-hearted pedestrian. "We shall never be able to get it in the door."

"Get it in the door!" exclaimed the drayman as the great truth dawned upon him. "Holy smoke, man, I was trying to get it out!"

STRATEGY.

"Look here, my man," said a young fellow staying in a country house to one of the grooms, "are you the chap who saddled Miss Jennie's horse this morning?"

"Yes, sir," replied the groom anxiously. "Anything wrong, sir?"

"Well, it was loose—very loose, you know," the young man reprimanded him. "As soon as she mounted this morning, it slipped, and, if I hadn't caught her, she'd have fallen to the ground."

"I'm very sorry, sir," said the groom, his face gloomy.

"But I did catch her," went on the young fellow thoughtfully. "I caught her in my arms, and—here's half-a-crown for you, my man. Do you think you could leave it loose again when we go out to-morrow?"

UNHAPPY MAN.

"Have you no friends?" asked the magistrate.

"No, sir; nothin' but relatives."

THE SOUL'S AWAKENING.

Madly one March I was mashed upon Maudie,
Blue-eyed and beautiful—sweetly sublime;
Prospects, my ties, and her stockings were gaudy,
Blossoms I bought for her—scores at a time,
Reckless red roses and languorous lilies
In ribbony bondage at ten bob a bunch;
Yet her affections froze, simply because I chose
Rabbit for lunch.

Joyous one June I rejoiced over Julia,
Giving her golliwogs, *gateaux*, and gloves;
People remarked there was something peculiar,
Wondrous, and wild in the warmth of our loves.
Yet, when I gauged the extent of my salary,
E'en while we dallied to snigger and scoff
At the pictures which hang in the National Gallery,
Julie broke it off.

Soft this September I smiled upon Cicely—
She is the shapeliest sweetheart I've struck,
Cuddling up close to me coyly and kissily;
Once, too, we picked up a horseshoe for luck.
I may eat onions, or peardrops, or anything,
Clad in the kit of my crackest of corps,
Deck her in diamonds or buy her some penny thing—
We are at war!

François.

PREMATURE.

A nurse, out with her small charges, had allowed the children to wander about a churchyard, reading the inscriptions on the grave stones. Presently Betty ran up with a very white face and gasped:

"Oh, Nanna, such a dreadful thing has happened; someone has only fallen asleep and they have buried him!"

WAR NEWS IN BEETLETOWN.

WILLIE BEETLE: "Look, ma, here's one of the big shells father's always talking about."

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SO UNREASONABLE.

HE: "Wot yer give notice for?"

SHE: "Well, missis she causes sich unpleasantness. I can't poke a hole in a picture or break a bit o' old china, nor drop a nob o' coal on the baby s 'ead without she tells me of it."

CAREFUL CHILD!

MOTHER: "Dolly, will you have some turkey?"

DOLLY (aged six): "No, indeed, mother!"

MOTHER (in surprise): "My goodness! What's the matter with the child?"

DOLLY (decidedly): "I know what's good for me. I had chicken-pox only last week, and I'm not going to have turkey-pox now."

INDISPUTABLE.

My Uncle Richard is quite a bore—
He'll talk for an hour on end, or more.
He likes to discuss how the world began,
But his favourite theme's the descent of man.

My Uncle Richard said yesterday:
"There's a point that puzzles me, by the way:
Men sprang from monkeys—agreed, my friend!—
But, tell me, from what do monkeys descend?"

And one said "Ha!" and the other said "Hum?"
And all the rest of us looked quite glum,
Till Tom (home from school) said suddenly: "Please,
I've heard that monkeys descend from *trees!*"

R. Mertun.

TEMPERAMENT.

VANDYKE BROWN: "Er—two ices, please."
WAITER: "Yessir. Strawberry or vanilla?"
VANDYKE BROWN: "Oh, vanilla, I think. It goes better with the wall-paper!"

THE ONE THING WANTING.

A bachelor millionaire was once showing a very attractive widow around his domain, and was as pleasant and gallant as any lady could wish.

"There's only one thing this place wants," he added pathetically, as the last bit of the bachelor homestead was shown.

"And what is that?" said the widow, with a little fluttering at her heart.

"More water, madam; more water."

THE ONLY DIFFERENCE.

OLD SERVANT (welcoming son of the house after long absence abroad): "Well, it does me good ter see you after all this time, an' you 'aven't altered either—just the same face, only 'igher up."

ACCIDENTS WILL HAPPEN.

TEACHER: "And now, who can tell me why we should always be neat and clean?"

LITTLE LIZZIE: "In case of accident teacher!"

SPIRITED AWAY.

He got carried away by the spirit of the times, and remained away for several days. He came to himself in his own room without knowing exactly how he got there. A friend sat beside him.

"Hallo!" he said as he opened his eyes, "what day is this?"

"This," said the friend, "is Thursday."

The invalid thought it over a minute.

"What became of Wednesday?" he asked.

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Mrs. DULLHEAD (proudly): "Just fancy, my dear, James has gone to address a public meeting."
FRIEND: "I didn't know he was a speech-maker."
Mrs. DULLHEAD: "Nor I. But he's been called upon to make a statement before a meeting of his creditors."

THE GENTLE HINT.

The ladies of a certain post-office are not credited with any great civility or attention to the public whom they are paid to serve.

A middle-aged man went in to buy stamps the other day, and found a young lady with elbows resting on the counter gazing abstractedly into space.

After waiting a few seconds without attracting her attention, the gentleman took off his hat.

"Madam," he said in a deeply reverential manner, "if you are engaged in prayer I will wait until you have finished."

FARMER BROWN: "So, Bill, I 'ear you're going to be married at last."
FARMER GUBBINS: "Aye, that I be! I were prayed for in church for the third time last Sunday."

AN UNFORTUNATE MISTAKE.

An old lady with her coachman drove up in a large brake and stopped opposite a huge red-brick building at the entrance to the main street. Her ring was answered by an official in uniform.

"I am come," she began, "to take the inmates for a picnic in the green fields and flowery meadows. It's a beautiful day, and it will do them a world of good, cooped up as they are in this building day after day."

The official gasped for breath. Never in all his long experience had he heard such a cool request. He simply gazed at her in astonishment.

"They can't come, madam," was all he could stammer.

"Yes, they can. Let them all come—men, women, and children."

"We never let them out," he added, in a hoarse whisper.

"Oh, yes, you do. I met two of the dear old men just now in their long, smock frocks."

A flood of light suddenly burst in upon the astonished attendant. He saw everything clearly now.

"Ah, I see," replied he, "you want the workhouse; it's just round the corner. This is the county gaol."

A CORDIAL INVITATION.

The man in the next flat was pounding on the wall.

"Look here," he cried, "I can't sleep with that kid yelling like that. If you don't make him stop, I will."

"Come in at once," said the baby's father. "You'll be as welcome as the flowers in spring."

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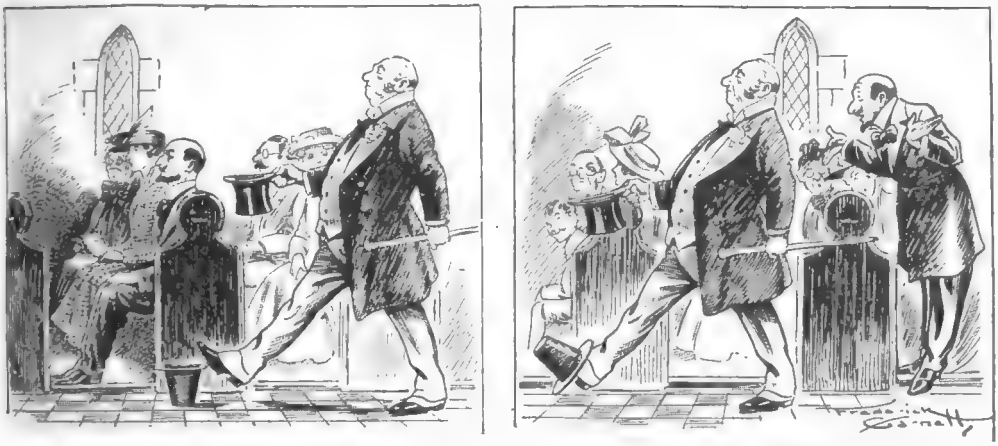

POLITE FRENCHMAN: "Pardon, monsieur, but is it not that monsieur is wearing my hat?"

THE NEXT BEST THING.

Of brave deeds done upon the battlefield amid the thunder of cannon, the cries of wounded and dying, of winners of the V.C., and great generals who rose from small beginnings, the teacher told her class, firing them with enthusiasm for their Mother Country.

"Please, miss," cried one little girl excitedly, "my father was in the Boer War."

"And did he fight in any of the battles?" inquired the mistress.

"Oh, yes," answered the little maid. "'E was at Graspan, an' Modder River, an' Pardyburg, an'——"

"And was he wounded in any of them?" pursued the teacher.

The little girl's face fell.

"No, miss, he wasn't wounded," she replied. "But please, miss, 'e 'ad a awful 'eadache."

RIGHT IN THE SWIM.

"I hear you are going to marry Archie Blueblood?" said one society woman to another. "Is it true?"

"Marry him!" exclaimed the other. "Not likely. What on earth could I do with him? He's rejected for the Army, he can't ride, he can't play tennis, golf, nor, for that matter, can he even drive a motor-car!"

"Oh!" said the friend, "but he can swim beautifully, you know."

"Swim, indeed! Now, I ask you, would you like a husband you had to keep in an aquarium?"

A DIFFERENT MATTER.

"I noticed you spoke to one of the two women we met just now quite sharply."

"Oh, that was my wife."

"But your manner was so deferential to the other one."

"Ah, but she's our cook."

The locket that Priscilla wears
She cherishes with pride.
It holds his photograph, you see,
And he's as handsome as can be,
And she's his chosen bride.

PRACTICAL PROOF.

"Is the guv'nor in?" asked the visitor.

The office-boy, gloating over the latest penny dreadful, with his chair tilted back, and his legs stretched out upon the desk, made no reply.

"I asked if the guv'nor was in," said the visitor.

The office-boy threw him a disdainful glance, blew a cloud of cigarette smoke down his nostrils, and resumed his reading.

"Didn't you hear me?" snapped the visitor.

"Of course I heard you!" answered the boy, scornfully.

"Then why the dickens didn't you tell me if the guv'nor's in?"

"Now I ask you," retorted the office-boy, as he recrossed his legs upon the desk and prepared to resume his reading, "does it look like it?"

AS OTHERS SEE US.

An old Scotswoman, who had resisted all the entreaties of her friends to have her photograph taken, was at last induced to employ the services of a local photographer in order to send her likeness to a son at the Front. On receiving the first impression she failed to recognise the figure thereon depicted as herself; so, card in hand, she set out for the artist's studio to ask if there was no mistake.

"Is that me?" she queried.

"Yes, madam," replied the artist.

"And is it like me?" she again asked.

"Yes, madam; it's a speaking likeness."

"Aweel!" she said resignedly, "it's a humblin' sicht."

DULL DOG.

"He's a nice man to take a girl fishing, I must say."

"Why, what did he do?"

"He fished."

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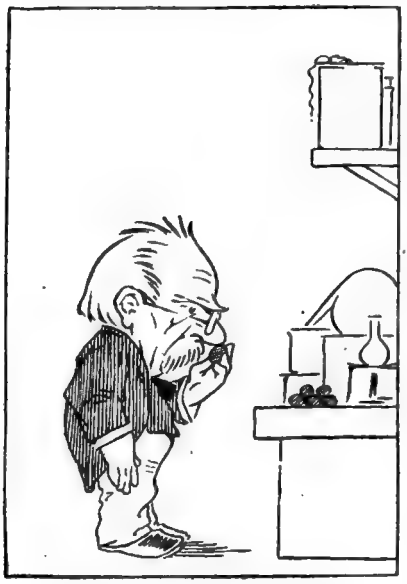
"WONDERFULLY INVENTIVE PEOPLE, THOSE GERMANS"—



1. Their chemists invent imitation food——

A GOOD PRESCRIPTION.

"Do you ever worry, old man?"

"Never."

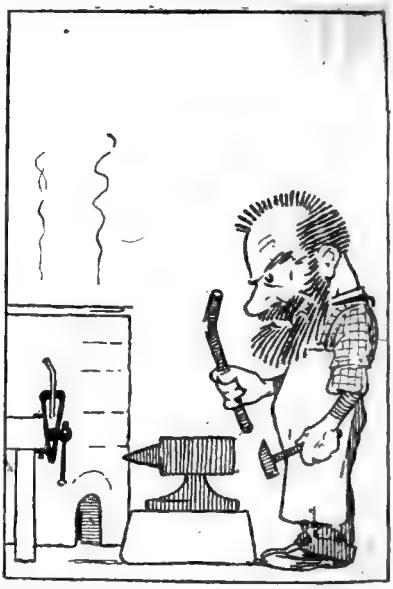
"How do you work it?"

"In the daytime I'm too busy, and at night I'm too sleepy."

TWO SOLEMN THINGS.

"Jeannie," said the stern old parent, "it's a very solemn thing to be married."

"I know that, father," said the lassie; "but 'tis a deal solemner not to be."



2. ——their engineers invent imitation metals——

"A BIRD IN THE HAND."

Wee Hughie wanted to go to the circus very badly, but his father was adamant.

"Nay, nay, laddie," he said. "Ye'd better gang tull the schule an' dae yer lessons, an' some day mebbe ye'll be Lord Provost of Glesgae."

"But, faither," protested Hughie, "there's thoosan's an' thoosan's o' boys in Glesgae, isna' there?"

"Ay, theer is that," agreed father.

"Weel," concluded the lad, "aw'll swop ma chance o' being Lord Provost for a ticket for the circus."

THE TRIAL TRIP.

PATIENT: "But—er—the operation won't be—er—serious, will it?"

YOUNG M.D.: "Only for me! I never tried it before!"

RESPECTING HIS FEELINGS.

"That dog of yours is a full-blooded Irish terrier, isn't he?"

"Hush, old chap, don't let him hear you. He thinks he is."

3. ——their financiers invent imitation money——

FIRST IN THE FIELD.

"Lots of the girls are joining training camps."

"So I see," said the manufacturer. "I'd better rush some khaki-coloured face powder on to the market."

CUTTING.

TOM: "Is it true that you proposed to Alice and were rejected?"

JACK: "Not exactly rejected—she said when she felt like making a fool of herself she'd let me know."

4. ——while the Kaiser sets an example by inventing imitation victories.

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For Fighting Men Only!

MISS MABEL FUNSTON GIVES PRIZES TO SOLDIERS AND SAILORS.

Photo *Bertram Park.*

Miss Mabel Funston, the pretty young actress, with whom this competition originated.

In the November Number Miss Mabel Funston, the charming young actress who made such a hit in *Mr. Manhattan*, offered splendid prizes for the best love-letter written to her by any soldier or sailor.

There is still time to enter the Competition, so if you want to distinguish yourself, and win a prize into the bargain, now's your chance!

It happened like this. Miss Funston has received so many delightful letters from men serving in the Army and Navy, who have enjoyed her acting or perhaps seen her picture in the illustrated papers, that she felt she would like to do something for them in return. So she hit upon the idea of a competition for soldiers and sailors only, in which the prizes are chosen and presented entirely by her. After reading Miss Funston's cheery little message I'm sure you'll all want to write her a love-letter forthwith. This is what she says:

DEAR FIGHTING MEN,

You have been so wonderfully kind to me, and to my countrywomen that I am hoping this little scheme I have thought out may give you some pleasure—it's just a simple competition, and you'll find all the details on this page.

Briefly it happened this way—I have been getting so many delightful humorous and pathetic love-letters from fighting men I have never seen that it struck me I'd like to start a competition and offer the prizes myself. The Editor of the ROYAL MAGAZINE said he would help me, so if you feel inclined to try for one of my special prizes just read the conditions and fire away.

I wish you luck, all of you, not only over this competition, but always in the bigger competition of life.

MABEL FUNSTON.

A word about the prizes. Miss Funston is giving six wrist watches engraved with her name in facsimile of her own handwriting to the senders of the six love-letters which she considers the best. She will also give twelve leather letter-cases each containing a signed photograph of herself, to the twelve men whose letters come next in order of merit.

You can take it from me these prizes are well worth having, for Miss Funston has scoured London to find gifts that—to use her own expression—are "worthy of our fighting men." The soldier or sailor who obtains one will be a much-envied individual, for to win a prize presented by a popular young actress is an event that only comes once in a lifetime.

All men of our fighting forces are eligible, save only personal friends of Miss Funston. Letters should be not more than 500 words in length. Each letter should be accompanied by the coupon at the foot of this page and bear the sender's name and address in full. The Editor reserves the right to publish any of the letters should he so desire.

Competitors who do not wish their names to appear in connection with their letters must state the fact when sending in their entries.

Entries must be addressed to The Editor, THE ROYAL MAGAZINE, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C., and the envelopes marked "Cupid" in the top left-hand corner. They must reach this office not later than first post on Monday, January 29th, 1917.

"LOVE-LETTERS" COMPETITION.

(To be enclosed with entry.)

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SATISFYING THE S.S.O.

By John S. Margerison.

"Zounds! I was never so bethumped with words
Since first I called my brother's father dad."

I.

The Senior Submarine Officer was annoyed, very much annoyed. And Lieutenant James Paget, the cause of his annoyance, was even more annoyed than his superior, but, as became one having little authority in the presence of much gold lace and high command, he said nothing about it. The S.S.O., however, taking advantage of his position, gave vent to his annoyance in words that were brusque, cold, and cutting.

"And what, may I ask, is this supposed to be?" he inquired, indicating the almost blank sheet of paper which the young officer had just presented for his perusal.

James flushed. The S.S.O. had no particular need to ask what it was, considering that he'd been in the habit of handling weekly submarine reports from all the units under his command for at least five months, and therefore might be expected to recognise an effort of this nature at first sight. Nevertheless, he *had* asked, and required an answer.

"That's the weekly report of His Majesty's Submarine L35, sir," said James meekly. Now, had anyone who knew James heard the meekness of his tone they would have been warned, and had the S.S.O.'s dignity not been so ponderous might have tipped him a wink to be careful.

The S.S.O. cocked a still more inquisitive eye at the Lieutenant.

"I suppose you know we expect big things

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from you?" he observed, "and that you realise how a report of this character reflects upon your ability as the commanding officer of a submarine?" He rose from the table and paced the cabin in his annoyance. "You've got a brand new boat, a sub-lieutenant to help you run her, and a crew of the choicest scoundrels you could have found in the whole Service. You've got a roving commission—you can roam at your own sweet will all over the North Sea and do whatever you like, so long as you report here on Sunday mornings—and yet, at the end of a week when almost every other boat in the Division has distinguished herself in some way or other, you've got 'Nothing to report!' It's abominable, sir."

"Quite so, sir!" said James, still meekly, as his superior paused for breath.

"If you make many more reports of this kind, Lieutenant Paget," went on the S.S.O., paying no attention to Jimmy's admission, "I shall begin to think that you are a vastly overrated young man. Indeed, if you haven't something more than usually interesting to say next Sunday when you come alongside I shall be reluctantly compelled to lay my views regarding you before the Commander-in-Chief, and ask him to appoint some more energetic officer to the command of 'L35.' That's all. Carry on!"

Jimmy "carried on," the words he would have given his soul to utter sticking in his throat and almost choking him. He climbed down the gangway ladder that led to the deck of his boat, and, save for the orders necessary to get that craft away from the side of her parent ship, spoke to nobody. It was not until the bigger ship had been left far astern that he gave vent to his feelings. But first, for the sake of his prestige, he sent all the crew below decks, retaining only the company of his second in command, one Sub-Lieutenant Walter Harvey.

"Harvey," said James, "have you ever felt you'd like to kick me?"

The sub stared at him in amazement.

"Not that I can remember," he said. "Why?"

"Well, if you'd felt like that when I came away from the *Ætna*," replied Paget, "I'd have been glad, and I'd have lent you my heaviest seaboots for the job."

Sub-Lieutenant Harvey still stared at James, but said nothing. He knew his commander—none better—for they had served together in bigger ships when Jimmy was a sub and Harvey a cheeky little midshipman.

"I've actually eaten humble-pie to a 'gilded popinjay,'" went on Paget. "I've allowed the S.S.O. to call me 'a much overrated submarine commander'"—he mimicked his superior's tones exactly—"and practically to say that I'm unfit to command this dear old tin-kettle. What d'you think of that, eh?"

"Who was it?" queried Harvey. "Not Smythe-Perkins, by any means?"

"The same, sonny," replied James.

"Then that's all right," said Walter. "If you take any notice of that juggins you deserve kicking, and I'll take the job on with the greatest pleasure. He was our navigator in the *Eclipse*, and even then his side was appalling. I don't suppose there's any living with him now he's the senior officer of a sub-marine divison."

James smiled at his sub's outburst. His own ill-humour was rapidly disappearing, though he realised that the S.S.O. could make things extremely warm for him if he went talking to the Commander-in-Chief. Besides, Jimmy's own previous record for pulling off hare-brained and reckless hazards had to be considered.

"You must have been reading his letters, Harvey," he said, when the other had finished. "Anyway, you've got a fairly good picture of his idiosyncrasies. Meanwhile, we've got to find something to strafe between now and this time next week, or I'm to lose my job. So, if we can't find a legitimate enemy we'll have to make one; that's all."

Sub-Lieutenant Harvey extended a finger towards the horizon in reply.

"There's something uncommonly like a whiff of smoke over there," he said, "or I'm losing my eyesight in the Service. Perhaps it's a chance for you to make a start on a full week's report."

"Maybe," replied Paget. "We'll dive, I think, and investigate. We don't want to frighten the bird by letting her see us. She might turn out to be the *Hindenburg*, or the Kaiser's yacht taking him out for a sea trip—I *don't* think."

He issued the necessary orders for taking "L35" under the surface, and soon, with the trail from her periscope hidden by a slight lop on the water, she was within three hundred yards of the ship Harvey had sighted. The latter, a big cargo-carrier flying the Stars and Stripes, was proceeding slowly, picking her way warily through the mine-infested waters. As "L35" broke surface she hoisted still another big ensign at her foremasthead and stopped her engines.

"In a bit of a hurry, aren't you, brother?" commented Paget, as he flung open the door of the conning-tower and climbed, megaphone in hand, to the summit of that structure. "I'm awfully sorry to disturb you," he bawled politely, "but, y'know, I've really got to search you. One never knows, these times,

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and I shall be awfully obliged if you'll send a nice comfortable boat across for me."

He watched a couple of sailors clamber into a boat at the cargo-carrier's davits. Then his roving eye caught something else, and, without feeling for the ladder with his feet, he dropped hurriedly into "L35's" interior, slamming the watertight door overhead and yelling an order.

"Down lads!" he cried. "Down for your lives!"

The sound of the water as it rushed into the ballast tanks, and the immediate hum of the motors as they sent "L35" on a long oblique dive downwards told their own tale, and when the dancing fingers of the depth gauges showed forty feet, James rose to his feet and wiped his brow.

"Another minute," he said to his wondering crew, "and there'd have been a run on the mourning establishments in your native villages. By the way, did any of you take a good look at that tramp while I was talking to her?"

"Yes," said Harvey. "I looked through the periscope and noticed that she had a searchlight in her crow's-nest. Besides that, I'd know her again by the cut of her jib, if that's what you're driving at."

"Good!" remarked James. "Next time we run across her I'm going to give her a little present she won't like. The dirty dog had a big torpedo boat waiting round the other side of her—she must have spotted our periscope as we approached—and she could only have been a German. Our chaps wouldn't have been so unsporting as to try and ram me when my attention was engaged elsewhere."

He turned away, and seated himself at the central control once more.

"My word," he observed to Harvey, "wouldn't old Smythe-Perkins have had a grievance if she'd got us? He would have said things if we didn't turn up to report 'with something more than usually interesting to say next Sunday.'"

Judging it safe, "L35" took a peep at the world above, but the German torpedo boat—her colours flaunting insolently in the breeze—was making frantic circles round and round the "Yankee" ship.

"No use trying to get that chap at present," said Paget sadly. "We'll push on and trust to luck to send her our way some other time when she's left her little pal at home. And I don't quite like the way that torpedo boat's swanking around; she might have rammed me by the airs she's giving herself. Just make a note of her number, Harvey, for future reference. 'S367.' Got it? We might have a talk to her one day, also, if I don't get the sack on Sunday."

"L35" pushed onwards, leaving the cargo-carrier and her escort far astern, and at length turned northwards on a new course. And as darkness fell she went below the surface for the night.

Monday was a blank day, absolutely, with not a single trace or sign of a ship. On Tuesday afternoon, however, "L35's" crew were sent into ecstasies of expectation by the sight of a thick spiral of smoke, which, upon approach, turned out to be coming from the funnel of an enemy mine-layer, sowing her deadly seeds in a part of the ocean where there was a shoal, and where Paget occasionally chose to spend the night lying on the bottom.

"That's a start on the report, anyway," remarked Paget, as he noted the discharge of one torpedo and the sinking of an enemy mine-layer on a virgin sheet. "But I don't think it'll go far towards pleasing the S.S.O."

But the remainder of that day was uneventful, though, late on Wednesday, "L35" sighted a fleet of Zeppelins, flying exceedingly high and steering westward. Hastily rising to the surface, Paget sent out the alarm *via* wireless, and, just at dusk, had the satisfaction of seeing the airships come hurrying back with a couple of cruisers hot on their trails, their guns firing as they came. James took "L35"—as befitting a craft who only possessed a tiny four inch gun—out of the way, and remained at fifty fathoms until the airships and the cruisers had gone home.

Next day—Thursday—was also a blank up to noon, and then the Zeppelins came out again. One tried to drop bombs on "L35" as she lay, with her wireless zipping and crackling the alarm once more, on the surface, but he was too high up and his missiles went wide. But this attack annoyed Paget exceedingly, nor was his annoyance lessened when a sea mist rolled over the waters half-an-hour later, and no sound of guns coming to his ears, nor glimpse of returning airships to his eyes he concluded correctly, that the airships had evaded the patrols, and had the fog to thank for it.

"Killing women and babies in England," remarked Paget, with all a sailor's contempt for the "gasbags." "That's all they're fit for. It's a rotten life, anyway. Half speed ahead. Dive to twenty feet, and stay there for the night. We might as well have a rest; we shan't get any after Sunday, when we leave the sea and start a farm!"

Friday morning came, and "L35," as was her wont, ran up her wireless mast to receive the orders and news of the day. And the

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very first words she received set the two score scallywags of her crew dancing with joy. One of the raiding airships, it seemed, had been brought down, a total wreck, by a daring aviator near London, while splinters had been seen to fly from a second. Furthermore, a sister submarine well away to the westward had that same morning glimpsed an evidently wounded Zeppelin struggling homewards, though she had lost sight of her in the mist before she could get within range.

"That's the rub!" ejaculated James, as he read the wirelessed words. "It's the infernal mist that does it. Now if the gods would only hear my prayer and send that damaged gasbag within range of this little peashooter of mine for ten minutes, I'd be content to let Smythe-Perkins strafe me for a week—though he might want to hug me instead, he'd be so pleased."

And then, as if in answer to his petition, the mist swirled in the morning breeze, thickened for a second, and lifted clear. And into the circle of sea and sky left by its rising there came the form of a huge airship, with the Iron Cross of shame painted on her bow and stern. She was obviously in difficulties, and no more than eight hundred feet up.

"Jumping Joseph!" cried Paget. "Here's a go! Harvey, get the gun unhoused quick, and give her a dose of iron tonic before she rises again. And if you miss her after the first shot I'll—I'll court-martial you and dismiss you from the ship."

Harvey laughed, and sprang aft to where the gun's crew had already brought their weapon into position. And as his eye touched the sight her breech snicked home on a full charge. The airship sagged slowly downwards, getting nearer and nearer to the sea every minute.

"It's a pity to waste shot on her," suggested Harvey. "She's done for already."

As if to fling the lie in his teeth, a machine-gun hidden on top of the airship's envelope chattered wildly, and sent a stream of bullets whistling around the heads of the men on the submarine's whaleback.

"Oh, well!" added Harvey. "That's asking for it, properly. I'm afraid you're going to get more trouble than you'll quite know what to do with. And here's the first instalment."

He pressed the trigger, and the four-inch shell whistled across the thousand yards of sea. It went high, but evidently scared one of the Germans pretty badly, for he lost his hold on her rigging and fell headlong into the sea. The second round swept home sweetly, and "L35" shuddered through her whole fabric as the gun barked again. This time Harvey scored a direct hit, and mingled with the rattle of the machine-gun a volley of guttural Teutonic curses came across the waters to "L35."

"The beggars are calling you some pretty things," cried James. "It's a proper strafing match, and, as we can shout the loudest, I'll back our side to win. Give it to her, lad, and don't miss, for heaven's sake!"

Harvey still smiled as he screwed his eye into the telescope. Then he pumped out shell as fast as the eager crew could load it, sending each shot through and through the great gasbag, which now sagged drearily in the centre. He ceased fire, however, as the airship's gondolas touched water and men sprang from them into the sea.

"Good for you!" cried the delighted Jimmy. "We've won. Now I suppose we've got to go and pick up the survivors, and I hope they'll give us the job of hanging 'em when we get 'em ashore."

"L35" went slowly ahead and reached the first swimmer, who was hauled aboard and passed down the conning-tower hatch. At that moment a heavy gun barked angrily away to port, and a shell pitched into the sea a hundred yards short of the submarine. James looked up.

"H'm!" he remarked. "Here comes a pretty cruiser looking for trouble. She doesn't approve of our doing the condescending victor stunt, so we'll get below out of her way, and let her pick up her own dirty comrades. We shall be all the sweeter for the lack of their company."

A second shell sang through the air, and in its fall drenched him with spray. He dropped to the steel deck below him once more, and "L35" took a hasty trip into the depths yet again.

"Another item for the S.S.O.'s report," said James, as he logged the demolition of the airship. "And I've got a witness to prove I'm not swanking, too. By the way, you had better pass a line round that German's ankles; we don't want him getting in the way."

He glanced at his watch.

"That cruiser's had five minutes to pick up the survivors," he remarked. "And as he thinks we're done in—or I hope he does—we'll go and convince him of his mistake."

Slowly, cautiously, "L35" poked the extreme tip of her periscope above the surface. James, at the business end, saw the cruiser—a German, and quite a big chap—lying hove to, evidently waiting for the boat which had picked up the Zeppelin's crew. Jimmy raised his hand.

"Stand by the tube!" he hissed, almost

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as though the cruiser might have heard him.

"Ready, sir!" said the Leading Torpedo Operator.

James altered the helm a trifle; then his hand dropped.

"Fire!" he yelled.

There followed a low hiss as the torpedo left the tube, the gurgling of water as the sea rushed in to take its place, and "L35's" bows gave a sudden downward cant under its weight. James, at the periscope, watched the track of the torpedo as it sped towards the unsuspecting cruiser. He saw it strike her side, right amidships; then a mighty column of water and a vivid flash of flame sprang simultaneously into the air, blotting her from sight. And when at last the spray settled, the great German cruiser lay half over on her side, in urgent need of assistance.

"The prospect grows brighter and brighter," remarked Lieutenant James Paget, as he turned the periscope round to glance astern. "And, unless I'm greatly mistaken, here comes a German torpedo-boat flotilla to ask awkward questions. This is where we do the disappearing stunt once more, and"—this to his delighted crew—"it's just possible that, with a small piece of luck, we shall be able to pull off the hat trick."

Unseen by Paget—for, wise man, he had taken "L35" into the depths once more—the flotilla raced up, and, while some took their suffering compatriots from the wrecked cruiser—including the crew of the strafed Zeppelin, thus twice punished—others cast around for the craft which had been the cause of her sudden end. They didn't find her, however; she had gone far beyond the edge of the circle around which they raced madly, and lay watching them with huge enjoyment.

James, at the periscope, noted how one boat, with studied insolence, refrained from dashing about at her top speed, and watched with gleeful anticipation how she cruised aimlessly around, evidently searching for his periscope.

"Let me see, Harvey," he called, when she came near enough for her number to be distinguished, "haven't we got a little account outstanding with his Imperial Majesty's torpedo boat Number 'S367'?"

"We have," replied the sub, searching through a notebook. "She's the lady who tried to ram us the other day when we were talking to the cargo-carrier."

"That's right," replied Paget. "Well, I'm going to give her a little on account. She's looking for us now, and if we aren't careful she'll be on top of us. Seems to fancy she's got eyes in her stern, though; she's backing this way."

He gave orders which brought "L35's" stem and the now re-charged torpedo-tube in line with the German boat's stern. Then he hissed the fatal word "Fire!" and the shot sped home straight and true. Right into the torpedo-boat's stern it flew, and she was never more a useful unit of the German Navy. Indeed, three of the searching boats hurried to her aid, and only got her crew out just before she sank to the bed of the age-old ocean.

"And that," remarked Lieutenant Paget, as he made yet another entry on the rapidly-filling report sheet, "is what is commonly called the hat trick—three assorted craft with three shots. It's almost bound to satisfy that gilded Senior Submarine Officer Captain Smythe-Perkins, R.N., and I shouldn't be surprised if he allows me to keep my job. It doesn't satisfy me, however; there's still one fly in the ointment!".

"We've only got one torpedo left, sir," reported the Leading Torpedoman at this moment.

"All right," returned James, "the dear old *Ætna* has a lot she'll never need. I think we'll run over and ask her what to be going on with."

He turned to Harvey.

"We shall have the taxpayer shouting hard," he observed, as he turned "L35's" bows towards England, "if we go on wasting his money about in this way. However, the S.S.O.'s to blame; he should not have been so rude when I last had dealings with him."

II.

"L35" ran alongside her parent ship and made fast. With the report in his pocket and a spare sheet in his hand James climbed lightly up the gangway ladder and saluted the S.S.O. In silence, save for the formal greeting, "Come aboard to report, sir," James handed in his report, keeping the odd sheet behind, however. The S.S.O. read it through, and something like pleasure illumined his ultra-dignified face for a moment.

"Lieutenant Paget," he said, quoting the *amende honourable*, "last Sunday I said you were, in my opinion, a vastly overrated officer. I want to take back those unkind words. I shall take the opportunity of recommending you for a decoration at the first opportunity."

"Thank you, sir," replied James, sure of himself. "If it's all the same to you, I'd rather you asked for a week's leave for

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"Jumping Joseph!" cried Paget. "Here's a go! Harvey, get the gun unhoused quick, and give her a dose of iron tonic . . . and if you miss her after the first shot I'll—I'll court-martial you and dismiss you from the ship." [Page 295, col. 1.]

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myself and my ship's company. We haven't had any for nearly a year, and we've clean forgotten what a bed looks like. And, while it's coming through, I should be glad if we could have some torpedoes; we haven't got one in the ship, having strafed a 'Yankee' cargo-boat with the last as we came home." And he pulled the other sheet of his report from his pocket and presented it to the stupefied S.S.O.

"'Yankee' cargo-boat?" gasped that gentleman, turning the colour of a ripe plum. "What on earth *do* you mean, man? You aren't out to be hanged, are you?"

"Well, not exactly," replied James cheerfully. "But she thought I was a greenhorn the other day when I hailed her, and slipped a German torpedo boat at me. I said I'd get her for that dirty trick, and I did. Serves her right for pretending to be 'Yankee' when she wasn't."

The S.S.O. agreed gravely, after extracting the full story from Paget. That worthy helped himself to a stiff peg of his superior's whisky and soda and stretched himself luxuriously.

"Ah, well, sir," he remarked, "I suppose I'd better be going. By the way," he added, "I suppose I've your full permission to tell my crew that you're quite satisfied with our report this week? They were quite upset when they heard I was in danger of being sacked."

The S.S.O. looked intently at Paget for a moment; he was not quite sure whether this irrepressible young gentleman was pulling his leg or not. Then he pointed to the door.

"If you aren't up that ladder and getting torpedoes into your boat in ten seconds, Lieutenant Paget," he said unsmilingly, "I'll come aboard 'L.35' and personally apologise to each individual member of your crowd of rascals on my bended knees."

James stared for a moment. Then he gave a shout of laughter and slammed the cabin door behind him.

"Blooming gilded popinjay!" he said, as he mounted the ladder. "But he's not a bad sort, after all."

TO CONSTANCE.

How fair a name, how sweet a maid;
With misty hair, and downcast eye
Gravely, demonstratively staid,
The hue of lapis-lazuli.
And yet, my Constance seems to me
But constant in inconstancy.

The pure and steadfast flame of love
Should burn unfalteringly bright;
With her it's often known to prove
An errant Jack o' Lantern light;
While all the land through which it darts
Is neatly paved with broken hearts.

Ah, cruel Constance! weep to see
These pale young men that linger near
In measureless despondency,
The captives of your bow and spear.
And oh, in pity, come what will,
Constance, to me be constant still!

Francois.

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"The DEVIL WAS SICK"

By Clare Thornton.

"The Devil was sick, the Devil a monk would be:
The Devil was well, the Devil a monk was he."

Renough had seemed restless and ill-at-ease all the morning, yet when the sympathetic Staff-Sister had asked if there was anything she could do for him he had shaken his head and replied smilingly that there was nothing in the whole world that he wanted, except, perhaps, a new body and soul. The Sister, whose sense of humour had survived two years' work in one of the largest military hospitals in England, had replied gravely that she would inform the Matron of his requirements. The man from the adjoining bed had sat by him for a time, but it had been obvious to him that Renough was disinclined to talk, and he had limped out to play bridge on the verandah.

There were three other officers in bed in the cheerful, airy hut-ward, but he had not once contributed to the stream of high-spirited nonsense that rippled from bed to bed. "Pussy," a red-haired subaltern in the Cheshires, whose expansive grin had rendered his nickname inevitable, beckoned to the Sister as she passed his bed.

"I say, old Renough seems a bit off colour to-day, Sister. Not worse, is he?"

"No! He does seem depressed certainly! But"—she smiled—"Miss Assheton will cheer him up when she comes this afternoon!"

But the odd thing was that Tony Renough should need cheering up! Generally his was one of the gayest and nimblest tongues in the ward, and though, lying helpless as he was, he could take no part in the crutch-fights, one-legged races, and other entertainments that took place on most days, he was able to emerge triumphantly from every battle of words, and his friend missed the scathing repartees, delivered always with a twinkling eye, that came from his direction.

He had hardly spoken a word all that morning!

After dinner there was a spell of peace in the ward. "Pussy," from whose long, lean body had been recently removed what he declared to be "the largest collection of shrapnel in England," settled himself for a sleep. The remaining "bed-cases," over at the other end of the ward, smoked and read.

Renough lay with closed eyes. But he was not asleep.

At half-past three there came a black-clad, erect old lady with white hair and a sorrow-lined face, whom the shrapnel-collector welcomed delightedly as "the mater." One of the patients at the other end of the ward, a subaltern whose right leg had been amputated a week before, laid aside his book to greet with carefully-repressed emotion a bravely-smiling flapper-sister and a shy young brother in an Eton suit. There came also a blue-eyed, fair-haired, beautifully dressed girl, she who, so the sister had predicted, was to cheer up Tony Renough.

When she sat down by the bed he smiled up at her gaily enough.

"Hullo, dear! What a ripping frock! You've a party to-day, haven't you? Concert in aid of maimed munition workers, isn't it? Sweet of you to come!"

"Is it sweet to go where one's simply dying to be?" she whispered, laughing and holding out to him a large, beribboned box

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of chocolates. She had very bright, clear blue eyes, and lips which seemed always to hold a smile in abeyance. On her slender left hand gleamed the fine diamonds of the ring that Renough had put there the week before. She glanced across at the red-haired boy and the black-clad figure by his bed and sighed. Renough followed her gaze.

"You're thinking of Safford! Well, it's lucky the old lady's got 'Pussy!' It's a wonder there's any of him left after the excavations he's undergone! Did you know him?"

"Lord Safford? I knew him a little. Just to dance with, you know. One—one couldn't help liking him, could one?" she added with a faint, rueful smile.

A look of amused reminiscence gleamed in Renough's sunken eyes.

"Poor old Safford! Yes, one liked him! But he was a rotter! An out-and-out rotter, if ever there was one!"

Her glance was slightly reproachful, but she said nothing.

"Don't think I'm a brute to speak like that of him, dear," he said. "Of course, everyone knows what sort of a chap he was. He died finely! Heard the story?"

"He died saving a man in his regiment, didn't he?" she asked.

He nodded. After a pause she began to talk of something else. Though he answered her, and was amusing and whimsical as usual, there was an air of suppressed uneasiness in his manner, and his eyes avoided hers.

Suddenly he said, in a jerky, strained voice:

"Joan—listen! Look here, I—I didn't talk about old Safford just for something to say! I——"

He stopped. She looked quickly at him and saw that he was deadly serious, that he, usually so fluent, was finding speech a difficulty. The knuckles of his thin brown hand whitened as he clenched it in a nervous gesture. She laid hers gently over it.

"Yes, dear?" she said quietly.

"Old Safford was a rotter! Well, I spoke of him to lead round to myself. Joan, we've got to have a straight talk! It'll be beastly—far worse than when the Doctor comes twice a day to dig probes about two miles into my body! But I've been bracing myself for it all day! You see, it's like this. You've got engaged to me, having known me only since I've been in hospital."

"Well?"

"The point is—you didn't know me before!"

The faint smile in her frank eyes died swiftly as she saw how grave he was.

"No. I didn't, Tony. Does that matter?"

"Not so much!" he replied. "But what does matter is—you don't know me as I'll be afterwards, when I'm out of hospital!"

"I don't think I understand at all," she said gently.

"I don't put things clearly." In his impatience with himself he moved his body, and a flicker of pain passed over his pale face. "What I mean is this! All the time you've known me I've been lying here helpless. It's not a man's life! It's more like an infant's! Oh, I know what you'll say"—his lips curved in a smile of dreary amusement—"I'm showing marvellous pluck because I don't yell when they do my dressings, heroic patience because I don't swear when those young devils of subs shy pillows at each other across my bed! The Sister will have told you that! Also, she may have repeated to you the lamentable jokes I whisper to her when I can't sleep at night! That'll be called 'heroic,' too! I don't know about 'single men in barracks,' but I *do* know that men in hospital, single or married, give a jolly good imitation of 'plaster saints!' Joan, you've seen me as a good little boy in bed, with a clean face and hands, eating milk pudding twice a day without a murmur, rolling bandages for the V.A.D.'s. My dear, you don't know me!"

She was quite grave now. She said nothing, but waited for him to go on.

"This isn't the *real* I! I must make you understand that! I was a rotter before the war!" He lowered his voice and glanced across at the irrepressible "Pussy," who was exhibiting proudly to his shuddering mother his famous collection of shrapnel. "I took leaves out of Safford's book! Not the blackest leaves, but—pretty smudgy ones! When I lie here life's as—as simple as a copy-book heading! Only an utter cad would do anything to make things harder for those plucky little nurses! Only a weakling or a chap whose nerve's gone would squeal at a bit of pain!

"Know that proverb about the devil? Well, I defy any devil to be otherwise than a saint when he's in hospital! No opportunity to be anything else! But when he's well—— When I'm well, Joan, I'll be different! I know most chaps sow wild oats, but—I'm afraid I'll go on sowing 'em long after the sowing season! You know the thousand and one ways a man can make a fool of himself when there's money to chuck about, horses, cards, all that! Dear, I'll make a rotten bad husband! No good blinking the fact!"

She sat with her head bent and her eyes fixed thoughtfully on the ground. From

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There was faint misgiving in the gaze he turned upon her averted face. . . . "You aren't —you haven't made up your mind to chuck me, have you, Joan?" [Page 302, col. 1.]

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across the ward they caught the words, "a reg'lar old sport!"

"Yes!" said Renough bitterly. "That's what his brother and the world in general call a picturesque rascal like Safford! Everybody knows what an awful time he gave his mother and the woman who was fool enough to marry him! And because he died pluckily, which is easy-going compared to living pluckily, he's a 'sport'! I don't want to be that kind of sport, old girl! So I want you to know, before you marry me, the risks you run. You'll admit I'm right to tell you, won't you?"

"Yes, dear, quite right," she replied gently.

Her face was still hidden by her hand.

"I don't want to make myself out worse than I am," he went on, "but I've been a very rackety sort of chap! People who predict things always said I'd turn out badly. It's in the family. Most of us Renoughs are rotters! We're not the sort who settle down and make good husbands! Oh, Lord, what a jaw this is! But I'm nearly through, dear! I——"

Lady Safford had said good-bye to her son, and as she passed Renough's bed she stopped and spoke to him, inquiring after his health. He replied cheerfully, and then said something sympathetic about her dead son. When she had gone he turned to his *fiancée* with a rueful smile.

"I didn't call him a 'good old sport,' did I? I'm not a hypocrite! But I've got tons of other vices! Are you willing to take the risk of marrying a chap who may make you miserable? But you'll want time to think it over!"

She did not answer. There was faint misgiving in the gaze he turned upon her averted face.

On the strip of lawn outside the hut a gramophone was playing the latest revue song. "Pussy" hummed the chorus, out of tune, and stifled a yawn in his pillow.

"You aren't—you haven't made up your mind to chuck me, have you, Joan?" whispered Renough rather hoarsely.

"No, no, Tony! How could I?"

"You'll think it over? Dear, I'll try, God knows I will! It's just that I'm made rotten, and I've got no confidence in myself! If I——"

"Oh, don't, don't!" Her voice was choked with sobs, and his eyes widened in dismay at the sound. "Tony, I'd marry you whatever you were, because I love you! I'd take any risk, gladly!"

She faced him at last. Though she had sobbed, her eyes were tearless, and he had never seen them so brilliant. Her lips were steady, even smiling.

"Tony, I've got to say it! You're my dear, brave man, and I'll say it straight out! They knew you'd rather that I, who love you, and am going to marry you so soon, should tell you. Dear—you'll never—never be really well again. Never be able to walk. Your back was hurt, you know . . . It'll mean bed always. No pain, dear. Oh, if only . . if only God would let me bear it instead!"

There was silence. "Pussy" had fallen asleep; his smiling mouth was open a little. The gramophone outside was braying a song of Harry Lauder's. The flapper-sister and Eton-suited brother of the young man who had lost his leg were laughing gaily at some joke of his. Yes, he might joke! A month or two hence he would, with the aid of an artificial limb, walk out in the sunshine again.

The girl closed her eyes lest the man in the bed should read the agony in them. Would he never say anything? This awful silence. . . .

"Well! That settles things!" he said cheerfully. "Since the devil is never to be well, he'll not have a chance to be anything but a saint! Thank you for telling me, dear! Beastly thing to have to do! Open the box and give me a chocolate, will you? An almond one. . . . Still, I'm glad I told you the sort of rotter I am!"

Regardless of nurses, patients, everyone but him, she bent and kissed his smiling lips.

"Dear—darling old sport!" she whispered tremulously.

"Thank you, dear!" said Renough with a sigh of relief. "I was so afraid you were going to call me a hero! That would have been a nasty jar!"

TO SOLDIERS AND SAILORS!

There is still time to enter for the delightful Competition announced on page 291. You'll find the prizes well worth winning.

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"The Morning After the Battle"—Mr. Thomas Henry's shop-assistant surveys the scene of yesterday's skirmish with kindly good-nature.

THE BATTLE FOR BARGAINS.

By Lesbia Robinson.

Joys and Sorrows of January Sales Illustrated by Leading Humorous Artists.

Opinion is divided as to whether January sales are an occasion for resentment or rejoicing. To those whose finances are in a state of depletion consequent on Christmas, the sight of attractive raiment to be had at half the usual price is only a source of irritation. On the other hand, to those who are compelled to replenish their wardrobes and have emerged from Christmas with a few inadequate shekels in hand, a four-guinea frock reduced to 35s. 11d. may be as manna in the wilderness.

Sales—that is to say, drapery sales—are the monopoly of women, though there are men who are afflicted with the disease in another form, who haunt sale-rooms and accumulate rare china and old furniture which they bear home in triumph to households who are yearning for a new set of saucepans or a carpet-sweeper.

The successful bargain-hunter is born, not made. She has the eyes of an eagle and the remorselessness of a "tank." While her weaker brethren are wandering aimlessly about she seizes her spoil and bears down on some already flustered assistant, relentless as a battleship

"And the Next Thing, Madam?"—Even in the face of fearful odds Mr. Starr Wood's hero retains his professional politeness.

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"Standing Room Only"—Mr. R. F. Smith portrays the plight of two ladies who yearn to be the proud owner of the same coat

going into action. No spot is sacred to her; she will edge behind counters or fight her way into the window with a dogged persistence worthy of the Somme offensive. Shop-walkers wither up before her, while her aggressive bearing makes short work of anyone who dares encroach on her preserves.

Some women go to sales in a casual, aimless way and buy things for which they have not the faintest use simply because they are cheap. This type of woman may set out with a vague idea of buying a raincoat, but is just as likely to come home with a pink parasol or a Japanese kimono. Her policy is not one of aggression, and she would die at the stake rather than enter into a battle royal over a remnant of silk or fair linen.

The greatest terror of sale-time is undoubtedly the lady who has a large family of assorted children, and trusts to the sales to see them through in the matter of raiment. The remnant counter is to her a domestic Verdun, and she brings to bear on it a battery of remorseless elbows and lacerating tongue. Woe betide the luckless person who appropriates the jersey she had intended for Freddie or the coat that was to make Maudie honoured among her schoolmates. The inveterate bargain-hunter has no morals; to her might is right, and she will cheerfully tear either jersey or coat from the grasp of their lawful possessor if she can do so without being lynched.

Some people make a fetish of sales, and are annoyingly superior to those who, less lucky or less unscrupulous than themselves, replenish their wardrobes when prices are normal. Such a one was Mrs. Grabble, an ultra-smart lady, with obtrusive golden hair and a fashion-plate figure. Her contempt for her neighbours' wardrobes was bitter and unconcealed, and she reserved her most biting remarks for Mrs. Homely, the retiring little woman who lived next door.

Mrs. Homely disliked crowds, and usually avoided sales as she would the plague; but times were hard, and a new hat a necessity if she was to live up to the dignity of Edward's uniform and one star. It needed only the

"An All-Night Sitting"—the police have no terrors for Mr. Collington Taylor's bargain-hunter, who arrives on the scene of action in the small hours of the morning.

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sight of a pansy-coloured velvet hat in the local draper's to decide her. Pansies were *his* favourite flower; she resolved to have the hat if she kept vigil all night to obtain it.

By rising at six o'clock Mrs. Homely managed to head the mob that seethed into the millinery department and secure the coveted headgear. It happened that the frenzied assistant to whom she gave the hat to pack up, laid it down while she dealt with a young Mont Blanc of hats that threatened collapse. Mrs. Homely, engaged in searching for her bag, which had become entombed, noticed nothing till the shrill voice of Mrs. Grabble smote her ears.

"That's my hat! Absolutely made for me!" she was saying. "Why

"I Saw it First!"—a pathetic remnant day incident set forth by Mr. Alfred Leete.

"War-time Economy"—Mr. Bertram Prance shows us the home-coming of a lady who went to a bargain sale "merely to have a look at the things."
THE ROYAL MAGAZINE.

didn't you show it to me at first? You knew I wanted something purple."

Mrs. Homely suppressed a yell of anguish with an effort, for the hat supported on Mrs. Grabble's paralysingly yellow hair was the precious creation of pansy velvet.

"But it's my hat!" Mrs. Homely entered the lists with the timidity of a sparrow who has strayed into a home for cats. "I've just paid for it. The young lady only put it down for a moment——"

"*Your* hat!" Mrs. Grabble's face rivalled the hue of the hat. The fact that her choice had fallen on the same hat as that of her despised neighbour was to her a humiliation. "For goodness' sake, take it! Rather dowdy, I think! It will suit *you* perfectly."

Mrs. Homely carried it home in triumph, and since that memorable day her pugilistic neighbour has never twitted her about her wardrobe.

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Photo *W. L. Shard.*

The trunk of an old oak tree near Chislehurst which has grown in such a manner as to resemble a bear leaning on a pole.

"IT'S A BEAR!"

A STRANGE natural curiosity is to be seen near Chislehurst, where, when viewed from a certain point, the decayed trunk of an old tree strikingly resembles a bear leaning on a pole. The "pole" is the trunk of another tree actually a few yards away.

This curious old stump is an object of considerable attention from passers-by.

PICTURE PARAGRAPHS

The Editor will be Pleased to Purchase Photographs of an Interesting and Out-of-the-Way Nature. All Photographs should be Accompanied by a Short Description.

A PICTURE PALACE ON WHEELS.

MOVING pictures in a moving theatre! This is the venture of an American showman who has converted a Pullman car into a thoroughly-equipped, well-appointed cinema, for the purpose of touring a number of the mid-western States.

The interior of the car has been remodelled throughout, and furnished in accordance with the best traditions of an up-to-date picture theatre. A temporary landing and broad stairs with substantial railings are joined to the rear platform when the car is side-tracked and the theatre opened for the benefit of the inhabitants of any small town favoured by a visit from "The Rolling Palace."

Electric current for the projector, the interior lighting, a searchlight mounted on the roof and the rows of coloured lamps ornamenting the outside of the car, is supplied by a special generating unit.

So far as is known, this is the first time that a travelling cinema theatre, housed in a railway car, has been put on the road purely as an amusement venture, though similar plans have been tried repeatedly in the past, for propaganda purposes.

Photo *By courtesy of Po[illegible]ular Mechanics.*

A Pullman car which has been converted into a well-appointed cinema; the car visits small towns in America and gives picture shows in a siding of the railway.

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"PARAFFIN FOR SALE."

THERE can never be any particular charm attached to the purchase of paraffin oil, but when it is brought to one's door on the back of a mule every day, there is at least a certain element of unconventionality in the transaction.

This is the custom in Oporto, where the "oilman" goes his rounds accompanied by a mule carrying cans of oil in a specially made device attached to the animal's back.

Photo *A. W. Cutler.*

A street scene in Oporto—the oilman on his rounds, accompanied by a mule carrying cans of paraffin and lamp oil.

CYCLING EXTRAORDINARY.

A BICYCLE which runs equally well on either land or water is the invention of a clever London mechanic.

This useful contrivance is just an ordinary bicycle ingeniously fitted with light, hollow floats, which may be quite easily detached to enable the bicycle to be used on land, and just as readily readjusted when required for use on the water.

When on the water the bicycle is propelled by means of a screw fixed between the floats and operated by revolving the pedals in the usual way.

The inventor is very anxious for the War Office to purchase his idea for the benefit of troops when crossing rivers or flooded country.

The seaworthiness of the "craft" is well assured when it is known that the owner cannot swim!

Photo *A. W. Cutler.*

This bicycle is ingeniously fitted with floats which enable it to run on water as well as on land, and is the invention of a clever London mechanic.

THE VILLAGE SMITHY.

THE pretty little village of Carlton-on-Trent, in Nottinghamshire, boasts a very quaint and picturesque blacksmith's forge.

Round the entrance a large brick horse-shoe has been built and painted black as an effective contrast to the white wall which forms the background.

Over the door of the forge hangs a board on which the blacksmith solicits custom in the following verse:

"Gentlemen, as you pass by,
Upon this shoe pray cast an eye.
If it be too strait, I'll make it wider,
I'll ease the horse and please the driver;
If lame from shoeing, as often they are,
You may have them eased with the greatest care."

The forge looks on to the Great North Road, and is situated about seven miles from Newark.

A quaint entrance to a forge in Nottinghamshire. The horse-shoe is painted black on a white wall, while the smith announces his calling by means of a verse hanging over the door.

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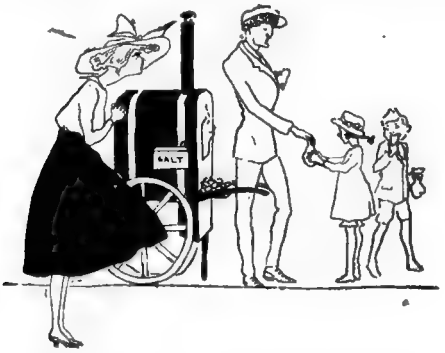
MY NOVEL.

By Ada Leonora Harris.

Count Gorgonzola (that's his name) had once known better days

I'm engaged upon a novel which, I'm hoping, when complete, will bring the British public in a body to my feet. My heroine, at any rate, I'm sure you'll say is sweet.

Her eyes are blue as summer skies or violets dipped in dew—I like both these expressions, though they're neither of them new, and cannot quite determine which to choose out of the two. With a skin of milk and roses, golden tresses for a crown, she looks a perfect picture—by the way, her name



Her affections have been ear-marked, so to speak, by a baked potato rival with a profile purely Greek.

is Brown, and she lives in humble lodgings with an aunt a. Camden Town.

And now I've introduced you to Maud Enid Geraldine, my heroine, whose age, I'd have you know, is seventeen, I'll next, with your permission, bring the villain on the scene.

Count Gorgonzola (that's his name) had once known better days; now on an ice-cream barrow he his coronet displays—a foreign accent, more or less, his villainy betrays. With love for Maud E. Geraldine, our heroine, he burns, who cries "Unhand me!" scornfully rejects his suit, and spurns the coronet (whereat her nasal organ up she turns) and owns that her affections have been ear-marked, so to speak, by a baked potato rival with a profile purely Greek; although his takings average but eighteen bob a week.

Of this same hated rival to get rid, at any price, the Count decides. So, after hesitating once or twice, he mixes prussic acid with a ha'penny lemon ice.

After hesitating once or twice, he mixes prussic acid with a ha'penny lemon ice.

But (why and how I can't at present undertake to say) the poison at the psychologic moment goes astray, and is swallowed by the villain in the good old-fashioned way, who writhes and squirms and tries to tie himself into a knot, confesses all his choicest crimes, especially the plot against his rival's life, and then expires upon the spot.

I'd meant to make it end like this; but now, I think, I shan't, but bring the Count to life, and then

I don't see why I can't make up a match between him and Maud E. G.'s maiden aunt.

I don't see why I can't make up a match between him and Maud E. G.'s maiden aunt.

Thus all ends happily. What's more, I don't see why on earth the baked potato hero shouldn't prove of noble birth, and Maud E. G. be married in a wedding gown by Worth?

I don't see why on earth the baked potato hero shouldn't prove of noble birth, and Maud E. G. be married in a wedding gown by Worth?

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THE ELEVENTH HOUR.

By C. Randolph Lichfield.

"He's half absolved who has confessed."

There was something suggestive of a big, trained elephant about Wallingford as he sat in his desk-chair listening to the pretty girl's tearful arguments and pleading, and occasionally nodding.

He sat with his left elbow nestled in a confusion of documents and newspapers, his hand supporting his chin. His other hand worked incessantly, removing small particles of ash from the end of a cigar he had extinguished in deference to his client's sex.

"We find our last hope in you, Mr. Wallingford, in your cleverness," said the girl; she seemed little more than that, though she was a wife, and soon, perhaps, to be a widow. "If you will only help us! I blame myself especially that we have not besought your help before, but we were so *sure* it would be all right; it seemed so impossible he could be convicted of shooting a man in the back, so unthinkable his appeal should be dismissed. You're our only hope! For the solicitor tells me there's little or no chance the Home Secretary will intervene after the Appeal Court's decision, unless we can throw doubt on the case.

"Oh, Mr. Wallingford! I'm told you used to be the cleverest detective at Scotland Yard before you became a private inquiry agent. Don't you want to show them that you are still cleverer than they? Won't you try to beat this clever wretch, Sherman, who has built up such a monument of circumstances against my poor husband? Here's a chance to show you're as good a man as ever and better than Scotland Yard's best! Take it—oh, do take it!"

Wallingford dropped the cigar-end into the ash-tray, and, sitting back in his chair, wagged his big head.

"I don't know that I can," he returned, regarding her with grave sympathy. "I could wish for nothing better than to help a young lady who has such splendid faith in her husband's innocence that she almost inspires the same in others, even though a jury has convicted him, a judge condemned him, and the Court dismissed his appeal. But I don't know that I *can* help you. I should have to look up all the evidence and arguments before consenting; I should have to find something to work upon."

In almost uncontrollable agitation Mrs. Mayland rose and pushed away her chair, but the next moment she drew it to her and seated herself again.

"I haven't made my point clear, I'm afraid," she stammered breathlessly. "It's like this, Mr. Wallingford. My husband admittedly went out to find Colonel Townds, and he took his gun with him."

"An act of defiance?"

"No, no! to assert his rights. Don't you see? He claimed that he was entitled to shoot that wood, and he took his gun with the idea of shooting something there and thus bringing the quarrel to a head by provoking Colonel Townds to prosecute and decide the point at law. We can all see that the wrong construction put on those facts is only a natural one; he admittedly went armed to pick a quarrel with the Colonel, and the Colonel was shot in the back by the discharge of the gun."

"Bad, Mrs. Mayland, bad!" said the detective in a rumbling tone.

"Yes, I know. I know it *seems* so."

"So is his statement that, after all, he left the gun resting against a tree at the fringe of the wood because he thought it best not to have the weapon in case he should lose his temper with Colonel Townds."

"Yes, I *know!*" cried the girl distractedly, her hands working. "But doesn't the fact that he made such damning statements against himself suggest that they are true? Short of confessing the crime, could he have said anything worse? Couldn't he have told any number of lies that would have served him better? And if his statements are true, he didn't do it, did he? He couldn't have done it, could he? Then who did do it but the man Rogers? They may say what they like, but the man Rogers did it, Mr. Wallingford, motive or no motive."

"It's a singular thing," mused Wallingford, "that while both your husband and this

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Rogers were in the immediate neighbourhood, neither will admit hearing the report of the gun or having seen Colonel Townds there."

"And there you are again!" exclaimed the girl vehemently. "Consider the probabilities of it. Rogers was tramping along the quiet road. What was there to prevent his hearing the report, and if he heard it why should he deny it? But my husband was pushing about through the wood itself, and may it not be that at the moment the gun was fired he trod on a stick or rotten branch, and the snap of it under his heavy walking-boots prevented his hearing the report of the gun? Or in his subconscious mind the report may have sounded like the snap of the bough, so that though he heard it he wouldn't think of it in his conscious mind and remember it?"

Wallingford looked at her with a very straight face for a moment, then, planting his hands on his desk, raised himself to his feet. The girl rose too.

"Is that your own idea?" he muttered. "Because it's amazingly shrewd for one in your troubled state of mind. We must find Rogers if we're to do anything. And that may be difficult if he's still tramping the country. For time's short. It may cost a bit; we mustn't lose a minute to save a pound."

"I don't care what it costs!" she cried. "Let it cost our last penny and trinket, but succeed—we should be rich indeed!"

"I'll put everything else aside, Mrs. Mayland," he promised, wheeling aside to open the door for her. "You can come along first thing to-morrow, can't you?—and I'll give you my view of the case."

"Must I wait so long? Remember I am without hope till I know."

He smiled wryly and looked at his watch.

"Four now," he said. "I'll probably—probably be up all night over this. But, see, Mrs. Mayland, I have your address. I'll telephone to your hotel if I see my way in the case."

"I can't thank you enough," she returned, giving him her hand.

As she went down the shadowy stairs he turned back into his room and lit his cigar again, then banged the desk-bell.

"Hallam," he said abstractedly, hearing recognisable footsteps behind him while he stood smoking thoughtfully, "that was the wife of Frank Mayland in the Spring Wood Tragedy. I'm turning everything over to you for the time being and am going into the case stripped to the waist."

"You want the fullest reports, I suppose?"

"Yes—everything you can lay your hands on," answered Wallingford, switching on the light over his desk. "Send Lawton to the solicitors to fetch the papers I'll be telephoning for in a moment. And let him tell them at the *café* to send me up a large pot of double coffee before they close."

Hour after hour he studied the case on the hypothesis that Frank Mayland was innocent, poring over the evidence, pondering over the arguments, puzzling over the implications. All the time he was conscious in a vague but harassing way that a pleading-eyed, brave-hearted young woman was counting the seconds till she should hear from him, and that a possibly innocent man in the splendour of a virile youth lay in a dark cell under the burden of an intolerable fear, with no other hope than what he could conjure in his mind from his wife's fond loyalty.

It was past midnight when, quite suddenly, in his second reading of the evidence, he gathered the papers together with both hands and pitched them impatiently into a corner of the room.

"Not enough in all that to let a mouse escape a trap," he averred. "But she's right, I believe. . . . The surest, shortest way to show he didn't do it is to show who did."

He took the telephone and rang up. While waiting to be put through he went to a cupboard and dragged out a small portmanteau, which he kept ready-packed against being called upon to travel at a few minutes' notice. He had just thrust a flask of whisky into it when the telephone bell rang.

"Yes. Is that . . . Thank you . . . Is that Mrs. Mayland? This is Matthew Wallingford. I've been through it, Mrs. Mayland, and the most favourable circumstance I can find is that nobody seems to have suspected R., and I shall be breaking new ground, apparently, and so stand a better chance of discovering something fresh than if the police rake had gone in advance.

"I don't want to raise false hopes, but I'm starting at once. . . . You need not thank me. . . . I don't know. . . . Oh, no, police wouldn't help me—wouldn't obstruct, of course, but wouldn't help unless I could show them my line was right. I'm going to Shepleywell as a start, as he left the workhouse there the day before, you know. . . .

"Yes. But I'll ring off now, if you'll excuse me. . . . Mustn't think those things, Mrs. Mayland; take all the comfort you can from my earnest assurance that I'll hunt hill and dale, upstream and down, for the evidence we need, even to the eleventh

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. . Oh, I hope you're not down—what . . . That's good-bye."

II.

Wallingford was away in the country five days, and four times Mrs. Mayland called at the office, hoping for some news.

On the fifth day she was there when Wallingford himself walked in, looking travel-stained and rather jaded.

"Oh, Mr. Wallingford, it was cruel of you to leave me in suspense so long," she cried, as he paused in the doorway, saluting her and the little elderly lady who was with her. "My mother, Mrs. Afflick, and I have been here every day hoping there'd be a message for me."

"I'm sorry," said Wallingford regretfully. "I've had nothing worth telling you."

"Nothing?" she exclaimed in dismay. "Nothing after five days? What have you done?"

"Everything possible in the time," he returned, laying aside his hat and bag. "You mustn't be discouraged. I warned you not to expect quick results, didn't I?"

"We're not impatient, only very, very anxious," explained her mother.

"Not impatient!" cried the agitated girl. "If it takes five days to discover nothing, how long must it take to establish the truth?"

"Perhaps not five minutes," Wallingford answered, resting wearily on a corner of his desk. "If the solicitors can possibly induce the authorities to postpone the day, urge them to do so. Please believe I am doing my utmost. Since I saw you I have visited some thirty towns and villages, made inquiries of ten times as many people, and visited the scene of the tragedy. You must have confidence in me to the last minute, please. I'll not be unworthy of it."

On the brink of tears, Mrs. Mayland sank into a chair.

"I—I'm sure you've done your best," she said brokenly. "But five days lost out of the fourteen! Think what it means to my husband and me."

Pitying her deeply, Wallingford said everything he could to comfort her, and explained at some length what he had done.

While he was still engaged with her there came a knock at the inner door, and as he opened it somebody secretively thrust a slip of paper into his hand. He scanned it with widening eyes.

"That's odd," he muttered. "Show him in when I ring, Leonard."

He waited while the door was closed, then turned back to the ladies.

"By a strange chance, here's a man offering us information," he said in an undertone. "It's a thousand to one he's no good, but we'll see. Don't be shocked if I deal with him roughly. I know these informers."

"Hadn't we better retire?" said Mrs. Affick uneasily.

"No, no," exclaimed her daughter, urging her to be seated. "I want to see him."

"Don't say a word," enjoined Wallingford, and rang the bell.

The visitor was a man of about fifty, very shabbily dressed in clothes several sizes too large for his slim, stooping form. A nervous smile lurked in the thin grey beard and stubbly moustache which veiled his mouth, and his dark little eyes were shiftily apprehensive.

"I want to see you privately," he said in a stage whisper, looking darkly at Wallingford.

"These ladies are personally interested in the case," Wallingford answered carelessly, leaning back against the cupboard. "What's the information you offer?"

"It's important—*very* important," declared the man, still speaking in a whisper.

"Who told you I wanted it?" Wallingford asked.

"Ah," said the man, and reflected a moment, "I can't tell you that."

"Then you can take it away. I don't want it."

The man straightened up angrily, paused for a moment, then, with a swinging motion of his arms, turned to the door. But he checked himself and looked back at the detective.

"People talk in their sleep sometimes," he said mysteriously.

"And others talk as much nonsense when they awake," returned Wallingford, regarding him with a cold, contemplative gaze. "What's your name, by the way?"

"William Croft."

"Let's see your hands."

The man hitched his battered hat under an arm and held them out.

Wallingford scrutinised them closely, turning them over and feeling their palms.

"Private means," he sneered, "but very little soap, eh? Let's see your boots."

"I 'aven't come to be laughed at," said the man resentfully.

"Hitch your foot up on this chair," ordered Wallingford. "We may deal."

"I ain't asking much, though it's worth a pile to moneyed folk," said the man mumblingly, and put a heavy, dusty boot upon the chair. "I don't twig your game, but I'm open an' above-board."

"You walk a good deal, don't you?"

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Wallingford drawled. "They've been good boots in their time. Stand down. Now, I'll make you an offer, Mr. Croft. You've taken the trouble to come all the way from Shepleywell Workhouse, I suppose, to tell me what I can quite easily guess. But——"

"You're talkin' through your 'at," exclaimed the man, startled and angry.

Wallingford laughed confidently and turned to Mrs. Mayland.

"This is interesting and not unimportant," he said with an alert, cheerful air. "The man's a fraud, but it shows somebody besides ourselves believes Rogers may have shot Colonel Towndes."

Astonished, Croft grabbed him by the shoulder and stared into his face.

"Blimy!" he gasped. "'Ow d'you know —'ow *can* you know?"

"Surprised to find a detective can detect, eh?" Wallingford chuckled. "It's perfectly simple. It's like this, Mrs. Mayland. By all the tokens this man's a tramp. His soft, idle hands and those once splendid boots—never bought for less than forty shillings, first-class walking-boots, handed out to him at the back door of some country mansion, I'll wager—settled my mind about that. And Rogers was a peddling tramp, remember. It's perfectly obvious. You can't fool me, Mr. Croft. There's only one way you could have known I'm in this inquiry. When I was at Shepleywell Workhouse the other day I was seen and recognised by 'Silky' Winder, who knew me to his cost when I was at the Yard. When you returned there on Tuesday or Wednesday, after a long tramp—your hands show you've not *been* at the workhouse for some time—you got to hear through 'Silky' that I'd been there inquiring about Rogers."

"That's right—quite right," answered the tramp, recovering a little from his astonishment. "An' I remembered Rogers. 'E an' I was there together a little afore Colonel Towndes was murdered over at Wipley. An' I said to myself, sez I, 'W'at can Mr. Wallin'ford want with that ole blighter, if it ain't got to do with that Spring Wood affair?' So 'ere I am—after a deal of trouble. Quite right, sir; quite right."

"And you come with a yarn about Rogers talking in his sleep," rejoined Wallingford with a disdainful gesture. "That's right, too, isn't it? Where were you when Rogers talked in his sleep?"

"W'y, in Shepleywell Work'ouse—'e lay next to me, an' I 'eerd every word 'e muttered," exclaimed Croft, smarting under the scornful interrogation. "Now! D'you want my information or not?"

"Humph!—no!" snarled Wallingford. "Why don't you think for yourself? Rogers couldn't have talked in his sleep at the workhouse about something that didn't happen till after he'd left; and he's never been back to this day."

Abashed, Croft stood and agitatedly played with his hat.

Wallingford strode up to him menacingly, and, catching him roughly by the shoulders, shook him.

"I could 'jug' you for this," he said. "D'you know that? I could 'jug' you for trying to obtain money under false pretences. And I may do it yet. Now, see here! You know the road, you know the men on the road, you know all the signs. Find Rogers for me within seven days and I'll give you—fifty pounds. Find him and tell me where he is and you shall have fifty pounds."

Croft looked into the detective's earnest, almost passionate face with glistening eyes and shook his head.

"Don't know w'ere 'e is," he muttered.

"Then find out!" snapped Wallingford. "You're one of the fraternity, and every tramp you meet will tell you if he knows. Find out. See, here's ten shillings! And here's another. Put th at one away separately, and when you get any tidings of Rogers telegraph to me. If you can't write you can dictate your message at any post-office. Take this—my card. Take care of it. Fifty pounds if you find Rogers within a week. Don't waste time boosting that ten bob and wondering where to start; get straight back on to the road and *earn fifty pounds.*"

"I'll—I'll do my best," said the dazed man. "I know the line 'e *used* to take. Maybe I might 'ear something."

Wallingford hurried him out of the room into the passage and talked to him for a few minutes, then dismissed him and returned to the room.

"A valuable auxiliary and a hopeful sign," he declared, as Mrs. Mayland broke off a conversation with her mother and turned to him.

"Why d'you think he suspects Rogers?" she asked eagerly.

"Why else should he have thought I was looking for him in connection with the case?"

"I don't mean that; what reason has he?"

"Little more than that he *might* have committed it. He says Rogers was very hasty-tempered. But now, Mrs. Mayland, I shall have to get busy. The finding of Rogers is one thing and the finding of evidence is another. I am working in a dozen directions, and only ran back to review the situation. Don't let Mr. Mayland lose

["THE ELEVENTH HOUR" continued overleaf.]

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hope. But urge the solicitors to insist on his innocence and make delay."

III.

For about a day and a half Wallingford conducted his inquiry from his office by telegraph and telephone. Along the wires his mind groped in a hundred directions, seeking a single spot where he might turn up a clue. By this means he located a married sister of Rogers, and he went up by express to Rugby on the remote chance that, being adroitly questioned, she would let slip some such fact as that Rogers had known Colonel Townds in the past.

It was a wasted journey, however, and Wallingford returned to London very anxious.

Continued failures led him a few days later to pocket his pride and go to Sherman, the Scotland Yard man who had charge of the case. They spent a long evening together, Sherman evincing the utmost readiness to assist. They discussed every point of view, but when they parted Wallingford was as baffled as before, yet believed more strongly than ever in Rogers' guilt.

But the following day he received a telegram which electrified him. Signed "Croft," it announced that Rogers had been seen on the Dover road, near Ashford, two days previously.

"I'll get something out of him!" he cried in his excitement to his clerk. "I'll put the fear of death into his heart! . . . . Wire to Mrs. Mayland 'R. seen near Ashford. W. gone to find.' Just that."

At nine o'clock that evening he reached Ashford, and much to his surprise Croft was waiting in the station yard.

"You've come!" exclaimed the tramp, grabbing him by the arm. "I thought, p'raps, you'd come by road an' I'd miss you. 'Ave you brought my money, for I've found 'im?"

"Found him?" cried Wallingford. "Where?"

"'Bout two miles out, makin' 'imself at 'ome in a shed 'side a stone-quarry."

"You must take me," declared Wallingford, greatly excited, and started across the yard. "My word!—I wonder—— Isn't there a taxi? Come—we can talk as we ride. If this is straight, Croft, you've earned your fifty. But I'm not stinting money on this case, and if you obey me and it goes well, why, I'll double it. D'you hear me?—I'll *double* it! Wait, now! Tell him where to drive us. . . . And look here, driver, pull up a bit short of the place and wait for us. I may want you."

In a trice they were in the cab and the cab was speeding up the street with a hum and a rattle which obliged them to shout to make each other hear.

With great circumlocution Croft related his experiences in search of Rogers, and how success had crowned his efforts.

"It's Rogers, sure as you're alive!" he shouted. "I *saw* 'im—saw 'im meself! An' you make it the 'undred an' I'll swear to anythin'—anythin' you tell me."

They got out on to a tufted pathway in the dark country, and, after looking about to make sure of his bearings, Croft silently led the way ahead for a few yards and through a gate into a field, stony under the feet.

After a minute or two Wallingford's eyes became accustomed to the gloom, and, seeing a stone-built erection like a small cottage before him, he stopped Croft, and, bidding him wait there, went on alone.

Cautiously he made his way to the open doorway, and a sense of failure oppressed him for a moment as he bent into the ruined building, bating his breath to listen. But as he straightened up he heard a sound of movement in a far corner and descried what he took to be the face of someone lying on the ground.

He stopped abruptly, barring the doorway, and took a hard breath.

"So!" he exclaimed in a strong, deep voice, with dramatic effect, "I've found you, Samuel Rogers, have I?"

Not a sound answered him, and, after feeling in vain for a door to close behind him, he whistled softly till Croft came creeping like a shadow.

Wallingford drew him in, and struck a match. The light spluttered for a moment in his shielding hands, then flowed out weakly to the bare stone walls, and disclosed the half-raised figure of a man lying in a far corner—the bundle of a man whose thickly bearded face gleamed palely and whose eyes stared widely, startled by a sudden terror.

"Rogers, isn't it?" asked Wallingford in an aside.

"Yes," answered Croft uneasily.

"Get back, then, and wait within call," said Wallingford, and dropping the match, trod upon it.

For a full minute he stood barring the doorway without speaking, and Rogers remained so still and silent it almost seemed he was not there.

"Well," said Wallingford in a stern, rumbling voice, having determined on the only course he could pursue, "how do you think this'll end, Rogers? D'you think an innocent man will be hanged on Friday, and an innocent woman's heart broken? Shall I

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tell you you lied when you said you didn't enter Spring Wood, didn't see Colonel Townds, didn t hear the report of the gun? You don't need me to tell you that, do you?"

There was no response, and suddenly Wallingford strode across to where the man crouched, and, groping to get hold of him, shook him angrily.

"Answer! Answer!" he demanded passionately. "Shall I tell you why you killed Colonel Townds or will you tell me, you dumb dog? Are you afraid to speak? But you've something worse to fear than that, and it's not speaking till the trap's opened under Mayland's feet, and nothing you can ever say or do can clear you of *his* murder, of letting him die like a dog to save yourself a few years' imprisonment. Hear what I say! The Law would deal lightly with you on your own confession that you shot Colonel Townds, if that confession were made to save Mayland's life; but leave it for me to prove against you, leave it till after Mayland's execution, and no gibbet will be high enough to hang you to, no prison grave deep enough to fling your carcass down! If you're afraid of the consequences of having shot Colonel Townds, a thou——"

"I didn't!" screamed the terrified man in abject confusion. "I wasn't there! I didn't do it—never saw 'im or the gun! I've told the truth!"

The denial was like a douche of cold water upon Wallingford, even though he disbelieved it. It chilled him into the silence of dismay, for he had shot his bolt and missed.

He got up and stood back helplessly.

"You'd rather hang for double murder than be imprisoned for manslaughter, then," he said haltingly, rubbing a hand over his face, moist with a fine sweat. "Very well. I'll see that you are."

Summoning Croft, he gave him some money and instructions with a mysteriousness calculated to excite anxious speculation in Rogers' mind, then dismissed him again. He leant in the doorway till Croft departed, and until the light of the taxicab was lost behind the shoulder of a low hill; then he turned, and buttoning up his coat, settled himself down upon the ground, guarding the doorway.

For a considerable time there was silence, broken within the darkness of the shelter only by the sound of Rogers' uneasy movements, and disturbed without by an occasional motor-car rushing along the main road.

Wallingford sat as silent as a shadow. He was putting Rogers to a sort of "third degree." His sole hope was that in the short time remaining to save Mrs. Mayland's husband he might so work on Rogers' sensibilities and imagination as to excite him to confess.

Once or twice Rogers had uttered soft sounds like the breath of a stifled question before he seemed forced to speak.

"W'at're you goin' to do?" he asked in a hoarse whisper.

"You'll see," answered Wallingford quietly.

"You're a—a police officer?"

"Never mind what I am; think of yourself."

"Anyway," came the sudden defiance, after a pause, and Rogers scrambled to his feet, "you ain't got no right to keep me 'ere. I ain't done nothin'."

Wallingford was towering in the doorway in an instant.

"You don't leave here, unless it is to make a full confession before a local magistrate till I know Mr. Mayland's been executed, and it's too late for you to save your neck," he declared determinedly. "You're in your death trap, Samuel Rogers, and you can only save yourself by saving Mr. Mayland."

Rogers shrank back, and after a moment dropped down into his corner again, muttering breathlessly, whereupon Wallingford resumed his position before the doorway.

"I never did it, an' nobody can't say I did," Rogers declared after a while, and seemed to settle himself for sleep.

But Wallingford did not believe a man could sleep in such circumstances, even with a clear conscience. For his own part, he lit a cigar for comfort, though after lighting it the thought struck him that its glow upon his face must give him a touch of weirdness in Rogers' contemplations. So, when he had slowly smoked it through, he lit another.

But Rogers made no sign. So still and silent he lay that at last Wallingford spoke to rouse him.

"Ever wear a shirt with a collar-band too tight for your neck, Rogers?" he drawled insinuatingly, and being answered in a way by a slight movement, added: "Uncomfortable, isn't it? . . . But there are worse things, Rogers. Imagine Mr. Mayland the morning after to-morrow—what'll he feel round his throat, burning into his flesh. . . . Imagine yourself when your turn comes—when you stand for one moment with only an inch-board between you and eternity, and in your agony you reflect that *he* might have lived, and *you* might have lived if you'd spoken up while you had the chance."

Wallingford listened intently, but heard no sound. He drew his coat more closely about

"THE ELEVENTH HOUR" continued overleaf.

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him, and huddled into the supporting angle of the wall.

"Don't think I'm asleep if I don't speak again," he said. "You can't escape."

Wearily, and with failing hope, yet rather expecting Rogers to confess suddenly, he watched the dark sky darken to the darkest hour, then slowly lighten. He took no notice of the slight sounds of Rogers' occasional movements, for they were never enough to suggest an attempt to escape. But his own silence and stillness while dawn was creeping up the sky must have lured him into dozing *without* his knowing it, for he became *conscious* of sunlight streaming on his eyes with a brilliance that dazzled him when he pulled himself together and started up, stiff and sore. He stood blinking and shading his eyes for the moment while he collected his senses; then he saw that Rogers was gone.

He dashed out into the open and scanned the surrounding scene with excited but uncertain eyes, then ran lamely across to the road, which was empty.

A ramshackle motor-car with a milk-churn in the tonneau was coming towards him, travelling in the direction of the town.

Wallingford went out into the road and stopped it.

"Seen a tramp?" he bawled. "Man 'bout middle age, thick beard, and——"

"Seen nubbudy but 'Enson's carter. Mean 'im?" mumbled the youthful driver.

"Done!" exclaimed Wallingford to himself. "Here, drive me along! May do something from the town."

He did not believe it, but hope dies hard.

He held himself in place on the jolting car with one hand and wiped his dusty, tired face with the other, shaking his head to every question the youth yelled at him. He was distressed beyond measure.

The car was already snorting up East Hill when his preoccupied eyes saw Rogers toiling up the road some thirty yards ahead.

In a moment Wallingford had sprung down from the car; in a minute he had left it struggling behind, and had caught up with the tramp, who drew away dodgingly.

"Give us a chance, guv'nor," pleaded Rogers in great agitation. "I'm goin', but give us a chance; don't let it seem I was drove to it. Let me do it on my own, guv'nor. I've been queer in me 'ead—'aunted like, thinkin' of the gent swingin' for me, but you've put the lid on it. Give a man a chance. I never meant to kill 'im. I looked into the wood, an' 'e came at me 'ell fer leather; 'it me, 'e did, an' called 'is bloomin' dog; an' me—I saw somethin' comin, I thought, an' snatched the gun an' let fly, to scare the dog I thought was comin', you see; an' I got the old bloke in the back as 'e turned an' w'istled. I never meant to kill 'im—not even the dog. So give me a chance, guv'nor; I'll take my gruel all right, but the gallows!—the gallows!"

So overcome was Wallingford that for the moment he could not speak. He took the abject wretch by the arm and led him a few yards up the hill.

"You—you're going to the police-station?" he queried gulpingly, stopping as the man renewed his appeal. "Right, then, I'll follow. Tell 'em what you've told me, *and stick to it.* You'll get off light, and find friends to back you. I guarantee that. Go on. I'll follow well behind. Go on. You needn't mention me."

He fell back and let Rogers go forward alone, and he straightened himself like a man relieved of a heavy burden.

"Put the lid on, did I?" he muttered, pulling out his watch. "And—none too soon."

He followed Rogers up the High Street, and through the churchyard, and from the shelter of an alley watched him enter the police-station. It chafed his excitement that he could not follow him there. It chafed him, too, that it was all too early and uncertain yet to telegraph to Mrs. Mayland, who was, perhaps, just now awakening to the dreadful suspense of the eleventh hour. He could only stand and wait to see that Rogers did not come out again after, his courage failing, giving, instead of his confession, a pretext for having entered.

Minutes went by but Rogers did not reappear, and Wallingford's fear of that possibility was beginning to abate, when to his unbounded surprise Mrs. Mayland came quickly, in a state of agitation, from the police-station. She saw him as he stepped out impulsively to meet her, and almost fainting she fell into the support of his arms.

"You!" she cried weakly. The tears were streaming down her white, strained face. "I want to telegraph! I came last night hoping to find you, hoping to help. I went in there to ask if anything was known, and a man came—Rogers! He's confessed *—confessed.*"

"I know, I know," said Wallingford soothingly. "Don't break down. It's all right now. The twelfth hour can't strike."

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MR. EDITOR —HIS PAGE.

Good Things for 1917.

"MIGHTIER THAN THE SWORD."

In the fairy tales which I pored over in my youth, giants were usually gentlemen of unwieldy size and savage mien, who, when things did not please them, laid about them with any weapon handy. There are giants in the journalistic world to-day; giants whose pens are mightier than the sword, who maintain their supremacy without bloodshed by the magic of the words alone. The mightiest of them is undoubtedly Horatio Bottomley.

Ask the man at the Front who is the most popular author in the trenches. He will tell you "Bottomley!" Ask the man at home who leads public opinion on the vital issues of the day. "Bottomley," will be your answer. This being the case, I may be forgiven a thrill of pride at having secured a series of articles for the Royal by this giant of journalism.

Mr. Bottomley wields a forceful pen at all times; he has never done anything finer than "Are They Really Dead?"—the first article, which appears in the February Royal, published on January 20th. In this article Mr. Bottomley discusses the question of immortality, with special reference to our heroes fallen in the war; it is an article to be read and re-read, and one full of comfort to those whose dear ones have "died for Empire's sake."

THE SILENT SERVICE.

There is so little, comparatively, written about the Navy, that a series of naval sketches by so popular an author as "Taffrail" is something of an event. As a chronicler of the intimate life of those who go down to the sea in ships, "Taffrail" has few equals, and the new series he has done for the Royal promises to be worthy of the best traditions of the gifted author of "Carry On!" and "Stand By!"

I can hardly say more, save that the first sketch appears in the February Number, and that to avoid disappointment you would do well to order your copy in advance.

SOME GENUINE GHOST STORIES.

To those who have a love of the supernatural ingrained in them, I commend a new book entitled "Ghost Stories," by E. and H. Heron. These stories are written with extraordinary vividness, and the uncanny element in them is so realistic that even the most hardened sceptic is guaranteed a genuine thrill, while those interested in psychology will absolutely revel in them.

This book costs only a shilling, or may be obtained for 1s. 3d. post free, from the Publisher, 18 Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

A MAGAZINE FOR BOYS.

If you have a young brother or nephew whose good opinion you are anxious to gain, introduce him to The Wolf Cub, the new penny monthly for boys under ten, and he will vote you "a jolly good sort!" The cover design, which is reproduced on this page, is typical of the breezy nature of the contents. It is a magazine to rejoice the heart of any boy, while its big brother, "The Wolf Cub's Handbook," price 1s. 6d., would make an admirable Christmas or New Year present.

A facsimile of the cover of the new penny monthly for boys. Full particulars appear on this page.

THE FRESH AIR FUND.

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R. F. Vakie, £1; Tink, 1s.; J. P. Thomson, 5s.; The Misses Weir, £1; Per Miss Gladys Cooper, £1 8s.; H. Clark, 2s.; Small Concert, per B. Holt and C. Collier and Friends, 14s.; W. Burden, 12s. 6d.; Brownie, 5s. 6d; J. T., 4s.; Anonymous, £2 10s.; Officers and Men of H.M.S. *Princess*, £4 7s.; Eric, Jim, and Eileen Steel, 3s.; Fresh Air Bloke, 12s. 6d.; Corporal, F. T. N., 7s; A. E. D., 5s.; Miss M. Ritter, £1; Mrs. Northmore, 12s.; A. T. London, £1; D. L., 1s; L. O. C., 2s.; Aero, 10s.; Miss B. Gellett, 1s.; Anzac, 5s.

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